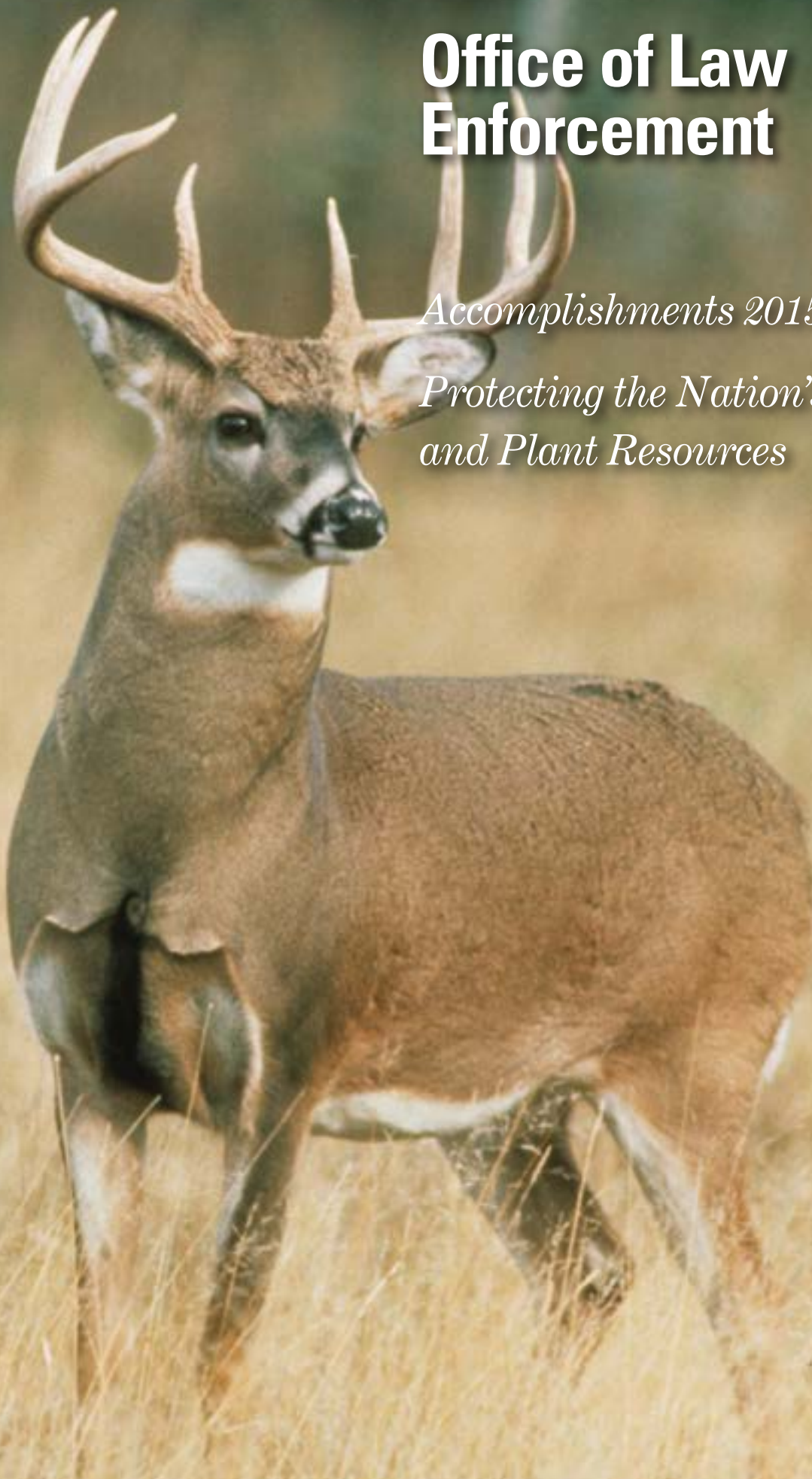


Office of Law Enforcement

Accomplishments 2015

*Protecting the Nation's Wildlife
and Plant Resources*



The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, working with others, conserves, protects, and enhances fish, wildlife, plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. As part of this mission, the Service – through the Office of Law Enforcement – is responsible for enforcing U.S. and international laws, regulations, and treaties that protect wildlife and plant resources.

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*Cover photo: White-tailed deer buck. Photo courtesy of
Herbert Lange/Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources.*

Message from the Chief



The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Office of Law Enforcement (OLE) continues our hard work in the protection of our valued fish, wildlife, and plant resources. Our focus remains on devastating threats to these resources such as the illegal trade, unlawful commercial exploitation, injurious species, habitat destruction and degradation, environmental contaminants, and industrial hazards.

In this publication, you will read about a few of the wildlife and plant crimes we have investigated. Investigations into such issues as multiple rhino horn and ivory trafficking schemes to China; the destruction of an endangered `Aiea tree in Hawaii, which is the host plant of the endangered Blackburn's sphinx moth; a complex investigation to disrupt and dismantle a large network of black market wildlife profiteers who trafficked eagle and other federally protected migratory birds; a deer trafficking case that resulted in \$1,725,000 paid in fines and restitution; a multi-year covert case in the black market trade of protected turtles; the first felony conviction related to the import or use of illegal timber and the largest criminal fine

ever under the Lacey Act; grizzly bear mortalities; illegal hunts in Alaska where several big game animals such as grizzly bear, moose, caribou, and Dall sheep were killed and mounted; and the arrest of a smuggler who was caught with 15,000 endangered Brazilian rosewood seeds that were hidden inside of motorcycle and airplane parts, inside of a drink bottle, and inside of his wallet and luggage. These cases are just a snapshot of the scope of the wildlife trafficking problem and highlight the need for the extensive expertise of the OLE professionals.

In 2015, we pursued almost 11,000 wildlife crime investigations resulting in almost \$12.5 million in fines, \$7 million in civil penalties, and 34 years in prison time; we inspected 193,971 shipments of wildlife and wildlife products entering or leaving the United States; examined 2,700 pieces of evidence; and trained hundreds of other Federal, State, Tribal, and international conservation law enforcement professionals.

With the recognition that wildlife trafficking is no longer merely a crime of opportunity, rather an organized network and a global crisis, our role continues to expand. We are working with our partners to implement a national strategy for combating wildlife trafficking. We are placing special agents in regional areas around the globe to assist those areas with training, coordinating enforcement, expanding capacity, and consultation on the illegal wildlife trade. In addition to our special agent attaché in Thailand, we placed special agent attachés in Botswana, Peru, and Tanzania, and soon, we will have a fifth attaché in China.

I want to thank the State and Tribal Game Wardens, Conservation Officers and Game Rangers, Federal and international enforcement partners, and the numerous Federal, State, and County prosecutors who work closely with us to prevent the illegal trade in fish, wildlife, and plants in the United States and in other countries. But my biggest and continued thanks go to the men and women of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Office of Law Enforcement. It is truly rewarding to work with a group of professionals and friends who exhibit such dedication and passion to our mission, and a solid commitment to the protection of our wildlife resources.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "William C. Woody".

William C. Woody
Chief, Office of Law Enforcement



Spotlight 2015

Continuing to work in response to President Obama's Executive Order and National Strategy for "Combating Wildlife Trafficking," the Office of Law Enforcement (OLE) continues to support wildlife conservation worldwide and prevent the illegal exploitation of species already on the brink of extinction. Accomplishments included casework in the United States, investigative coordination overseas, and capacity building.

Operation Crash

Special agents with the Service's Special Investigations Unit continued their work on Operation Crash – a comprehensive, nationwide investigation of trafficking in rhino horn that, by the close of the year, had secured the arrests of 28 individuals or businesses, the successful prosecution of 20, and the disruption of several smuggling networks.

Sentencing included a total of 29 years of prison and \$6.6 million in fines and restitution. In 2015 alone, nine individuals or businesses were sentenced for their roles in rhino horn and elephant ivory smuggling.



Through Operation Crash, Service SAs have seized rhinoceros and elephant parts worth millions of dollars. Photo credit: USFWS



Chief William C. Woody and Director Daniel A. Ashe carry an ivory carving to the crusher in NYC during the ivory crush. Photo: USFWS

In May of 2015, one subject, and owner of an auction house, was sentenced in Federal court to 36 months in prison and followed by two years of supervised release. He bought, sold, and smuggled rhinoceros horns and objects made from rhino horn, elephant ivory, and coral that were smuggled from the United States to China. His corporation was ordered to pay a \$1.5 million criminal fine to the Lacey Act Reward Fund and the court also banned the corporation from trading in wildlife during a five-year term of probation. His smuggling scheme involved others who were also sentenced.

According to court records, the subject and his company admitted to being part of a felony conspiracy in which the company helped smugglers traffic in endangered and protected species, in interstate and foreign commerce, and also falsified records and shipping documents related to wildlife purchases in order to avoid the scrutiny of the Service and U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP). The company also aided foreign buyers by directing them

to third-party shipping stores that sent the wildlife out of the country with false paperwork. Charges were brought after the subject purchased endangered black rhinoceros horns from a Service undercover special agent.

A different subject, and a Canadian antiques dealer, also admitted to selling items made from rhinoceros horn, elephant ivory, and coral from auction houses throughout the United States to Canada. He was arrested after flying from Vancouver, Canada to New York City where he purchased two endangered black rhinoceros horns from undercover Service special agents at a storage facility in the Bronx, New York. After purchasing the horns, the subject had the undercover agents drive him, and a female accomplice acting as his interpreter, to a nearby express mail store where he mailed the horns to an address in Washington State that was less than one mile from the Canadian border. He also falsely labeled the box of black rhinoceros horns as containing "handicrafts." The subject indicated that

PHOTO OPPOSITE PAGE:

On June 19, 2015, the Service held its second ivory crush. The crush took place in Times Square, New York City. The night before, a reception was held at Tavern on the Green.

Photos: Tami Heilemann/DOI, Amy Jonach and Kayt Jonsson/USFWS

he had people who could drive the horns across the border and that he had done so many times before. At the same time he was arrested in the U.S., Canadian authorities executed a search warrant at his antique business in Canada. Canadian law enforcement seized various wildlife objects from the business including elephant ivory and coral wildlife products that were positively identified as those purchased in the U.S., via a New York City-based internet auction business, and smuggled into Canada. In addition, during the search of his business, Canadian law enforcement also discovered illegal narcotics, including approximately 50,000 ecstasy pills. In March of 2015, he was sentenced to 30 months in prison.

A third subject was sentenced to serve 25 months in prison, followed by three years of supervised release, and assessed a \$150,000 fine payable to the Lacey Act Reward Fund for his role in an illegal wildlife smuggling ring, during which rhinoceros horns, and objects made from rhino horn and elephant ivory worth nearly \$1 million were smuggled from the United States to China. He admitted to working as one of three antique dealers in the U.S. who were paid to obtain wildlife items and smuggle them to Hong Kong.

U.S. Ivory Crush

“The U.S. Ivory Crush at Times Square,” the second ivory crush for the Service, was held on June 19, 2015 in Times Square, right in the heart of New York City, and crushed over one ton of seized, illegal ivory. In addition to the crowd of thousands, in attendance were representatives of African nations and other countries, dozens of leading conservationists, Federal and state legislators, several celebrities and advocates from the entertainment world, and reporters with camera crews from U.S. and international media outlets. Speakers at the event included the Secretary of the Interior; Sally Jewell; Service Director Dan Ashe; U.S. Representative Steve Israel; U.S. Representative Grace Meng; CBP Commissioner Gil Kerlikowske; Wildlife Conservation Society, Executive Vice



President for Public Affairs, John F. Calvelli; New York State Senator Brad Hoylman; and the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation Commissioner, Joe Mertens. Other conversation partners included the African Wildlife Foundation, the Association of Zoos and Aquariums, The Humane Society of the United States, International Fund for Animal Welfare, the Natural Resources Defense Council, Powerscreen, and World Wildlife Fund.

The majority of the ivory came from one single case - an 8-year Service investigation that resulted in nine convictions for smuggling and Lacey Act offenses relating to the illegal importation and sale of elephant ivory. The main subject was a Philadelphia store owner, who over a 9-year period acquired more than 400 pieces of carved elephant ivory, valued at approximately \$800,000. In some instances, the subject had stained the ivory and directed an accomplice to create false receipts in order to make it appear that the ivory had been lawfully acquired before international and U.S. law imposed strict regulations on the importation of elephant ivory in 1989. Over the years, he had sold tens of thousands of dollars of carved ivory to customers from his Philadelphia store, and prior to the search of the store in April 2009, was attempting to sell his business, including the ivory collection, for \$20 million.

As with the first Service ivory crush,

the second ivory crush focused global attention on the slaughter of elephants in Africa and enforced the message that elephant tusks have no place in commerce. The event was carried on multiple news channels and also streamed live over the Internet. Millions of people, from around the world, witnessed hundreds of elephant ivory tusks, carvings, and other objects pulverized by an industrial rock crusher.

In addition to reducing consumer demand, there is strong evidence that these U.S. crushes have encouraged other governments to destroy their ivory stockpiles. Since the first crush

in 2013, and with the support of the local U.S. embassies, the governments of Belgium, Chad, China, Ethiopia, France, Hong Kong, Kenya, Mozambique, Republic of the Congo, Thailand, and the United Arab Emirates have also destroyed their ivory stockpiles.

International and Domestic Training

Throughout 2015, OLE provided several international and domestic training missions in support of the Executive Order on Combating Wildlife Trafficking. A total of 17 special agents and two wildlife inspectors conducted international trainings for 188 foreign nationals from 28 countries.

In partnership with the National Association of Conservation Law Enforcement Chiefs (NACLEC),



A Service special agent instructs how to photo-document evidence at the International Law Enforcement Academy in Bangkok. Photo: USFWS

Service special agents, and the Chief’s office, facilitated the NACLEC Leadership Academy. This one-of-a-kind academy, held at the Service’s National Conservation Training Center in Shepherdstown, West Virginia, graduated 35 participants from 27 states including Arkansas, California, Colorado, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Idaho, Indiana, Kansas, Maine, Michigan, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, New Mexico, Ohio, Oklahoma, Oregon, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Texas, Utah, Vermont, Virginia, Washington, Wisconsin, and Wyoming, as well as one Service supervisory special agent.

Three separate Wildlife Investigator Training Courses were provided at

officials from the Philippine’s Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources and National Police, as well as Vietnamese generals and senior civilian wildlife officials.

An Advanced Wildlife Trafficking Investigations course was provided at the Naresuan Camp in Cha-Am, Thailand. One special agent, and instructors from HSI and non-governmental organizations, presented the investigator course to 38 participants from Thailand’s Department of National Parks Wildlife and Plant Conservation, Border Patrol Police, Department of Special Investigations, Economic Crime Suppression Division, Office of Attorney General, Immigration Bureau, Customs



Amara Roberts and Babe Lansing, Rangers of the Southern Ute Indian Tribe, hone their firearm proficiency. Photo: The Southern Ute Indian Tribe

the International Law Enforcement Academy (ILEA). Two were presented in Gaborone, Botswana and one in Bangkok, Thailand. In total, 13 Service special agents and two wildlife inspectors presented the investigator course to 115 wildlife and customs officers from the countries of Benin, Botswana, Brunei, Cambodia, Cameroon, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Gabon, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Kenya, Laos, Madagascar, Malawi, Malaysia, Myanmar, Namibia, Philippines, Rwanda, South Africa, Tanzania, Thailand, Togo, and Vietnam. The intensive two-week course included both classroom studies and a mock investigation.

The Service’s special agent attaché in Bangkok, Thailand, with two Service special agents, a Hawaii Department of Land and Natural Resources biologist, and a retired CBP officer participated in the U. S. Department of State’s (DOS) Marine Crime Scene Investigations training that was held in the Philippines. This highly successful course trained 35

Department, Department of Business Development, Anti-Money Laundering Office, Bangkok Metropolitan Police Bureau, Office of Forensic Science Police, Provincial Police, the Natural Resources and Environmental Crime Suppression Division (NRECD), and the National Intelligence Agency.

Here at home and unique to Service OLE trainings is hosting the Native American Conservation Officer Training. One such training took place in the Mountain-Prairie Region, in Billings, Montana. Service OLE assisted with the annual 40 hours of in-service training for tribal conservation wildlife law enforcement officers. Forty-seven Tribal officers represented 19 Tribes including Oglala Sioux Tribe, Sisseton-Wahpeton Oyate, Crow Tribe, Spirit Lake Nation, Lower Brule Sioux Tribe, Three Affiliated Tribes, Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe, Mescalero Apache Tribe, Southern Ute Indian Tribe, Fort Peck Assiniboine and Sioux Tribe, Ute Tribe, Sac and Fox Tribe of the Mississippi in Iowa, Standing

2015 Investigative Statistics

Investigative Caseload *

Statute	Cases
African Elephant	45
Conspiracy	61
Eagle Protection	218
Endangered Species	6,901
False Statements	23
Lacey	2,040
Marine Mammal Protection	269
Migratory Bird Stamp	19
Migratory Bird Treaty	600
Other Federal Laws	81
Rhino Tiger Labeling	34
Smuggling	97
State Laws	135
Wild Bird Conservation	47
Total	10,570

** This table reflects investigative cases worked by Service special agents and wildlife inspectors during FY 2015*

Annual Penalty Statistics *

Fines	\$12.5M
Prison (years)	\$34M
Probation (years)	\$278M
Civil Penalties	\$2.7M

M = million



For over 20 years, Service OLE, with the assistance of the Native American Fish and Wildlife Society, has provided training to Native American conservation law enforcement officers. Photo: USFWS

Rock Sioux Tribe, Northern Cheyenne Tribe, and the Shoshone and Arapahoe Tribe. Participants ranged from recently hired officers to those with several years of experience and represented approximately 500 years of combined law enforcement “boots on-the ground” experience.

State Chiefs Leadership Academy

The second class of the National Conservation Law Enforcement Leadership Academy (NCLELA) graduated in September 2015. Service OLE and NACLEC collaborated in 2012 to create this leadership academy specifically tailored to wildlife law enforcement program leaders. The goal of the NCLELA is to prepare new conservation law enforcement executives to effectively carry out their job responsibilities adaptively in a rapidly changing world and by providing training that prepares these leaders for the evolving complexities of wildlife crime. The focus

is to provide the practical skills and knowledge needed by those in executive-level conservation law enforcement leadership roles in Federal or state agencies.

The program is an unprecedented forum for the managers of wildlife law enforcement programs and is student-centered with a high degree of student involvement. The NCLELA fellows are engaged in such topics as adaptive leadership, leading change, resource management, personnel management, shaping organizational culture, strategic planning, surviving and succeeding as an executive, establishing a leadership legacy, and more.

Seven graduates of the first NCLELA class have since been promoted. We want to congratulate Walter Rabon, Deputy Commissioner of Georgia DNR, Rodmen Smith, the new Colonel for Minnesota DNR, Rick Olson, the new Chief of Law Enforcement for Utah

DNR, Thomas Grohol, the new Director of the Pennsylvania Game Commission's Bureau of Wildlife Protection; David Bess, the new Chief of the California Department of Fish and Wildlife Law Enforcement Division; Jon Cornish, promoted to Colonel of the Maine Marine Patrol; and, Colonel Curtis Brown, the new Law Enforcement Director of the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission.

The third annual academy is currently underway, with graduation slated for September 2016.

Special Agent Attachés

To lead the fight against global wildlife trafficking, OLE established an International Operations Unit and continued to assign senior special agents as “special agent attachés” at U.S. embassies in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania; Gaborone, Botswana; and Lima, Peru. Their work complements the outstanding work already accomplished

by the existing attaché in Bangkok, Thailand. These attachés cover a full-scope approach to law enforcement by having the knowledge and authority of a ranger, a border or customs officer, and a Federal investigator, and are experts on investigating wildlife trafficking and breaking up smuggling networks. The program has increased efforts to build wildlife law enforcement capacity in critical regions, and in the short time since these attachés have been in place, they have provided critical support to strengthen enforcement and expand international cooperation throughout the regions of Southern and Central Africa, South and Central America, and Asia. They have also assisted in wildlife trafficking investigations by providing to local governments investigative expertise, technical assistance, training and capacity building, increased coordination among government agencies, and supporting Wildlife Enforcement Networks (WENs) throughout their areas of responsibility. By stationing these experts around the world in strategic international locations, the Service is bolstering ongoing international partnerships to protect the world's wildlife from poaching and illegal trade.



The Thailand Attaché assisted a partner nation with a CITES protected rosewood timber case. Photo: USFWS

The National Targeting Initiative

In 2015, the Office of Law Enforcement created the National Targeting Initiative (NTI), integrating itself into the U.S. Customs and Border Protection's (CBP) Commercial Targeting Analysis Center (CTAC), and with the mission to target cargo shipments of illegal wildlife. Through an interagency Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), Service OLE now has direct access to CBP's Automated Targeting System (ATS). This means our very specialized wildlife trafficking experts can utilize the world's most advanced cargo targeting system as a tool against wildlife traffickers. OLE

piloted the NTI program at two U.S. ports of entry with plans to expand to additional ports in the future. Through this program, OLE-NTI personnel alerted front-line field staff concerning the interdiction of illegal wildlife products that may be smuggled into the U.S. The program has demonstrated its effectiveness with several seizures including elephant ivory tusks and carvings, caviar, sea turtle shells, shark fins, and inlaid furniture. During the



A Service K-9 and wildlife inspector search for illegal wildlife at LAX international mail center during Operation Flyaway. Photo: USFWS

year, 357 shipments were referred to Service wildlife inspectors to be examined and 31 shipments were found to contain undeclared wildlife products.

Connected to the NTI initiative, Service OLE participated in a 10-day international crackdown on wildlife trafficking that resulted in seizures of illegal wildlife items at airports and international mail facilities in Miami and Los Angeles named, "Operation Flyaway." This joint operation was the first customs-centric regional wildlife operation that focused on the Western hemisphere and on illegal wildlife trade coming into the United States from South America and Mexico. Law enforcement from the World Customs Organization; U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE): Homeland Security Investigations; CBP Office of Field Operations; the National Oceanic Atmospheric Administration; and Mexico and various South American and European countries also participated in this effort by combining their key resources in the fight against wildlife trafficking.

This successful, global operation resulted in 23 arrests of wildlife traffickers and 775 illegal wildlife products and animals

were seized including queen conch shells and meat, sea turtle shells and skulls, elephant meat, ivory pendants, tiger teeth, parrots, monkeys, caiman, white-tailed deer, and live tortoises. In addition, 17 tons of dried brown sea cucumbers, 168 kilograms (370 pounds) of shark fins, and more than 2,000 timber logs were seized.

This operation highlighted that Federal wildlife law enforcement, along with global counterparts, can demonstrate to wildlife traffickers that they will be arrested and the illegal products seized. Together, these countries strengthened their commitment against wildlife smuggling that damages fragile ecosystems, promotes economic instability, causes species to go extinct, spreads infectious diseases, and also funds organized international crime.

International Trade Data System

To create a "one-government" approach for the trade industry, President Obama issued Executive Order 13659 -- *Streamlining the Export/Import Process for America's Businesses*. This Executive Order formally mandated the participation in, and development of, the International Trade Data System (ITDS) and established the Border Interagency Executive Council (BIEC), which serves to develop policies and processes to enhance coordination across border-management agencies.

ITDS is being facilitated by the U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP). It will create a "one-stop" Internet interface for the export/import trade by combining the policies and procedures of over 100 agencies that have a regulatory, trade promotion, or a statistical role in international trade. Currently, importers and exporters, who must receive clearance from multiple agencies in order to move a shipment internationally, need to provide the same information multiple times via different forms and processes. The system, which is being designed and deployed over a multi-year period, will improve Service oversight of wildlife trade from both a resource protection and customer service standpoint. ITDS will provide the core technological infrastructure for future Service wildlife inspection and smuggling interception operations and an infrastructure that is an absolute prerequisite for improving program performance in preventing global wildlife trafficking and facilitating legal wildlife trade.

Full participation in this project will assist Service wildlife inspectors to



identify cargo that poses the greatest risk of containing illegal wildlife. With access to data on all U.S. imports and exports, the Service will also be better positioned to intercept illegal shipments that enter, or attempt to exit, at ports not staffed by Service wildlife inspectors and also those shipments that have been waived through the system, by other agencies, without Service knowledge. With ITDS data and communications capabilities, wildlife inspectors will be able to screen shipments nationwide and stop those that may be in violation of wildlife protection laws. Service enforcement

efforts will also benefit from improved communications and intelligence sharing with CBP and other Federal agencies that regulate trade and police the Nation's borders.

In 2015, the following accomplishments were completed: an MOU with CBP to access and share import/export data within CBP's Automated Commercial Environment (ACE) was signed; a National Interest Determination with the Department of Commerce to access Electronic Export Information (EEI) was negotiated; an onboarding

plan and implementation guide for the Service's Message Set design for ACE was created; and several Trade Working Group meetings of software developers, customs brokers, and importers to present and discuss the design and implementation of ACE by the Service were convened. The ITDS pilot is scheduled to be launched in 2016.



The second graduating class of the National Association of Conservation Law Enforcement Chiefs Academy at the National Conservation Training Center – September 2015.

First Row L to R: Jeff King (WI); John Lund (WY); Troy Dow (ME); Greg Williford (TX); Mitch Lane (UT); Rodney Ivie (MO); Christy Wurster (CA); Randy Stark (NACELC); Ed Grace (USFWS Deputy Chief)

Second Row L to R: Mike Hobbs (WA); Steve Hunter (IN); Casey Thomas (OR); Jeff Clauson (NE); Floyd Harper (AR); Jamie Landrum (SC); William Tobey (OK); Scott Edberg (WY)

Third Row L to R: Kurt Blanchard (RI); Jay Russel (FL); Michele Welsh (OH); Don Duval (FL); David Malloch (MI); Clifton Swofford (TX); William Poole (SC); Bruce Corley (USFWS); Mike Perry (NM); Greg Wooten (ID)

Fourth Row L to R: Ben Byrd (NM); Stephen Adams (GA); Kevin Adam (ME); Drew Aydelotte (DE); Mark Leslie (CO)

Fifth Row L to R: Benny Prior (MO); Michael Reeder (PA); Dave Trader (WV); Chris Morrow (MO); John Douglas (MT); Dan Melson (KS); Jason Batchelder (VT)



Pacific Region

Special agents, wildlife inspectors, and support personnel in the Pacific Region are responsible for Federal wildlife law enforcement in the States of Washington, Oregon, Idaho, and Hawaii as well Pacific Island territories that spread across 5 million square miles of ocean. The Region features tremendous ecosystem diversity, supports over 400 threatened and endangered species, and encompasses some 270 million acres of land, water, coral reefs, and ocean floor on 67 National Wildlife Refuges along with other large areas of wildlife habitat.

Challenges faced by Office of Law Enforcement officers charged with enforcing Federal wildlife laws range from travel distances, climate change, and invasive species in the Pacific to the rapid growth of “green” energy and the commercialization of the many protected species that reside in the Pacific Northwest.

Strengthening Federal, state, tribal, and local enforcement partnerships is a priority in the Region as is monitoring wildlife trade at three designated ports (Honolulu, Seattle, and Portland) and other locations including Guam and numerous northern border ports of entry. Service officers also strive to complete the mission of the Service in ways that demonstrate a deep respect and appreciation for the widely varying cultural and resource values across the Region.

PHOTO OPPOSITE PAGE: *This endangered `Aiea tree was destroyed during construction. There are less than 150 known founders remaining in the wild.* Photo: USFWS

Accomplishments

A multi-year investigation concerning international and domestic snake trafficking resulted in two defendants pleading guilty to Lacey Act violations and the interstate receipt or transport of illegal wildlife. They admitted to the illegal collection, transport, and receipt



A California kingsnake was one of several snake species trafficked domestically and internationally. Photo: USFWS

of snakes from various states, such as New Jersey, California, and Oregon. Combined, their sentencing included eight years of probation, 600 hours of community service, \$12,800 in fines, and a \$1,000 fine to the New Jersey Land Trust.

A joint investigation conducted with the National Marine Fisheries Service resulted in six Federal search warrants executed in the Honolulu, Hawaii area. As a result, a Federal Grand Jury indicted five individuals and one business on 21 counts including conspiracy, smuggling on import and export, Lacey Act trafficking, and Lacey Act false labeling for commerce of products derived from illegally acquired walrus, whale, elephant, and black coral.

Another Hawaiian investigation revealed that construction at the University of Hawaii, Kona campus, destroyed a critically endangered `Aiea tree that is the natural host plant of the endangered Blackburn's sphinx moths, and is endemic to the Hawaiian Islands. Based

on the investigation conducted by the Service, the university agreed to pay \$9,000 for mitigation work on adjacent land.

Also in Hawaii, the County of Maui disbursed over \$52,000 in restitution for the take of listed and migratory birds. The Hawaii Wildlife Center received \$22,152 in compensation for rehabilitation work they performed on the recovered wedge-tailed shearwaters. The Hawaiian Islands Land Trust received \$30,000 as a settlement from a wastewater treatment facility that allowed botulism toxin-infected carcasses to remain in settling ponds, which led to a significant loss of water birds. The investigation also discovered that a former staff member had illegally buried carcasses without proper notification to authorities.

In Idaho, a joint investigation with the U.S. Forest Service resulted in a subject paying \$1,287 in restitution for damaging critical bull trout habitat. The defendant admitted to unlawfully filling a stream crossing in a creek that is a tributary



Gary Young became the Special Agent in Charge for the Pacific Region in October 2012. Young began his career in conservation law enforcement in 1982 as a boat operator on Galveston Bay for Texas Parks and Wildlife law enforcement division. In 1984, Young was appointed to a position as a state game warden for Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, serving in several duty stations. In 1993, Young was hired as a special agent and was assigned to the Wichita, Kansas field office. After a short period, Young moved from Kansas to a newly created one-person field office in Cedar City, Utah where he worked cooperatively with other Service programs, local landowners, and developers on the many endangered species issues in the area. In 1998, Young was selected as the Resident Agent in Charge (RAC) in Fairbanks, Alaska where he served for two years. In 2000, Young moved to San Antonio, Texas as the RAC for south and west Texas. While serving as the RAC for south and west Texas, Young managed law enforcement operations and the import/export program for the Service on the Texas-Mexico border. In 2009, Young returned to Alaska as Assistant Special Agent in Charge for the Alaska Region in Anchorage. He remained there until accepting the SAC job in the Pacific Region. SAC Young has a bachelor's of science degree in criminal justice from Texas State University.

of the South Fork of the Boise River in Idaho.

Also in Idaho, a subject paid \$5,525 fine for the killing of a sow grizzly bear in violation of the Endangered Species Act. Prosecution was handled by the U. S. Attorney's Office in Pocatello.

In a joint investigation with the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, the Yakama Tribal Police, the Navajo Nation Police, the Alberta Fish and Wildlife Division, and the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, three Yakama Nation members were found guilty for their role in the illegal commercialization of eagles. Their combined sentencing included 10 months of jail time, seven months of home confinement, seven years of supervised probation, \$1,805 in fines and assessments, the forfeiture of firearms and vehicle, and ordered not to hunt outside of the Yakama Indian Reservation.

A member of the Coeur d'Alene Tribe pleaded guilty to violating the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act after a cooperative investigation, with the Coeur d'Alene Tribal Police and the FBI, discovered a large array of eagle feathers, hawk feathers, bird skulls, and bird feet at his residence. He was sentenced to three years of probation, 30 days of home confinement, \$4,000 in restitution, 300 hours of community service, the completion of a hunter education course, and no hunting or possession of firearms for three years.

Three members of the Tulalip Tribe were sentenced for their actions concerning separate bald eagle investigations. The first member was sentenced to 111 days in prison and two years of supervised release for clubbing two bald eagles to death, and then attempting to sell them. The second member was fined \$350 for purchasing a bald eagle, and the third was sentenced to 56 days in jail, and one year of supervised probation, for selling a bald eagle.

In 2015, a Yakama Tribal member was found guilty for driving off-road and harming plants on the Arid Lands Ecology Reserve, within the Service's National Wildlife Refuge System. The defendant was sentenced to pay \$32,600 in restitution, a \$1500 fine, and to serve one year of probation.

On several occasions, special agents met with tribal leaders to discuss law enforcement activities surrounding trust species and to explore additional ways special agents and tribal law enforcement

may assist one another. Tribes involved in these outreach opportunities included the Quinault Indian Nation, the Makah Tribe, the Yakima Nation, and the Port Gamble S'Klallam Tribe. A special agent also attended the annual meeting of the Affiliated Tribes of Northwest Indians where questions from the attendees were answered.

Community outreach and education is also a priority for agents in this region. They provided several training presentations to other Federal law enforcement partners, including the Public Interest Environmental Law Conference, and spoke to audiences concerning law enforcement careers and wildlife crime. They established a collaborative partnership with an electrical cooperative, private citizens, the Idaho Fish and Game, and conservation groups to create an innovative mechanism to save trumpeter swans from power line collisions. Most importantly, and with special agents from the Pacific Southwest Region, Service OLE of this Region met with members of eBay's Global Regulatory Policy and Government Relations Management Group and discussed efforts to expand international cooperation with eBay and PayPal in the furtherance of combating global wildlife trafficking.

In total, the regional office responded to over 1000 inquiries from the public concerning general wildlife related questions including public concerns about injured gulls, baby birds, eagle nests, hunting questions, Federal wildlife policy, and media requests.



The 'Aiea tree is the natural host plant of the Blackburn's sphinx moth. Both the tree and moth are endangered. Photo: USFWS



Illegal wildlife items seized during Hawaiian search warrants included walrus ivory, elephant ivory, whale bone, and black coral products.
Photo: USFWS





Southwest Region

The Southwest Region covers the States of Arizona, New Mexico, Texas, and Oklahoma and shares over 1,650 miles of border with Mexico. The Region contains diverse fish and wildlife resources, including over 250 species of fish, wildlife, and plants that are federally protected under the Endangered Species Act. It encompasses habitats that range from lowland deserts and seemingly endless plains to Gulf Coast beaches and towering mountain peaks.

Wildlife law enforcement efforts are coordinated with state game and fish agencies and with Federal counterparts. Special agents and wildlife inspectors in the Region provide law enforcement support to more than 40 National Wildlife Refuges, 27 National Parks, 20 National Forests, over 30 million square miles of other Federal and state lands, over 100 distinct Native American tribal areas, and 24 U.S. Custom's ports of entry.

Challenges in the Region range from protecting endangered Mexican wolves to disrupting interstate trafficking of wildlife ranging from freshwater fish to big game species. Enforcement work includes promoting compliance under Federal wildlife laws by oil and gas producers and other industries whose activities affect protected birds; inspecting wildlife imports and exports at two designated ports (Dallas-Fort Worth and Houston) and five border crossings (Nogales, Arizona; and Brownsville, El Paso, Laredo, and Tornillo, Texas); and partnering with Service biologists to address issues affecting protected species and their habitat.

PHOTO OPPOSITE PAGE:
Operation Silent Wilderness resulted in 36 subjects being prosecuted. Photo: Steve Hillebrand/USFWS



During an investigation, covert special agents purchased over 1,100 pounds of illegal red snapper. Photo: USFWS

Accomplishments

Operation Silent Wilderness was a complex, wildlife trafficking investigation led by Service special agents of this Region along with the Navajo Nation Department of Fish and Wildlife and wildlife conservation officers, from several states, which resulted in the prosecution of 36 subjects for the trafficking of migratory birds. The goal of the operation was to disrupt and dismantle a large network of black market wildlife profiteers involved in the trafficking of eagles and other federally protected migratory birds.

The operation was initiated at the request of the Navajo Nation after it was discovered that a Tribal member was selling eagle and other migratory bird feathers. This crime adversely impacts the sustainability of the golden eagle, and other migratory bird populations, on their reservation.

Cooperative investigative work included covert activities such as the tracking of internet sales and buys by special agents. These actions led to seven residential search warrants served in Alabama, Arizona, Louisiana, and Utah. By executing search warrants, conducting

interviews, and coordinated intelligence gathering, law enforcement agents seized an estimated 8,413 migratory bird parts and products representing a minimum number of 589 federally listed migratory birds from Canada and 10 U.S. states. Bird species included 68 anhingas, 61 eagles, 186 hawks, 24 falcons, 48 woodpeckers, and 169 songbirds. This case resulted in working with over 13 investigative partners and covering 10 Federal prosecution districts.

Several laws were violated including the Lacey Act, the Bald and Golden Eagle Act, the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, the Endangered Species Act, the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora, and Canadian wildlife laws. In total, subjects were sentenced to almost nine years in prison, \$69,700 in restitution, over 27 years of probation, 13 years of supervised release, \$24,625 in fines, 1,060 hours of community service, 2-years home confinement, and 6-years suspension of hunting license. In addition, other crimes were also uncovered by this investigation that led to prosecution including one individual being found guilty of receiving and possessing child pornography.



Special Agent in Charge (SAC) Nicholas Chavez has managed Service law enforcement operations in the Southwest Region for the past nine years. He started with the Service as a cooperative education student in 1988 and worked as a wildlife inspector in Boston, Massachusetts, and El Paso, Texas. He became a special agent in 1994 and conducted criminal investigations of wildlife crimes in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, and El Paso and Brownsville, Texas. After working a stint at Law Enforcement Headquarters, he became the Assistant Special Agent in Charge in the Midwest Region, a position he held until moving to his current position. Chavez holds a B.S. degree in wildlife science with a minor in criminal justice from New Mexico State University; he earned an M.S. in wildlife science from that same institution.



A red-tailed hawk photographed by a trail camera at the Sevilleta National Wildlife Refuge. Photo: USFWS

The operation was named “Silent Wilderness” to stress the necessity to end the killing and trafficking of migratory birds for the black market trade. If this illegal activity is not stopped, our country will undergo a vast loss, and be left with, a silent wilderness.

In an effort to reduce the chronic overfishing of red snapper in the Gulf of Mexico, the State of Texas and the Federal government created commercial fishing regulations limiting the yearly amount that can be caught by eligible fishermen by setting an individual fishing quota. Service special agents in this Region cooperatively worked with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, U.S. Coast Guard Investigative Services, and Texas Parks & Wildlife Department to investigate fishermen who were violating the law. As part of this investigation, special agents, working in an undercover capacity, purchased a total of 1,125 pounds of red snapper for \$6,636 from a subject. The investigation documented that the subject violated Federal law by not reporting the catches towards his individual fishing quota and violated State law by failing to obtain a wholesale truck dealer’s fishing license. The fisherman, and his business, pleaded guilty to violating the Lacey Act and was sentenced to a three years probation, to pay \$10,000 in restitution to Texas Parks and Wildlife, and surrender his commercial fishing license for his role in the illegal commercial take of red snapper.

A joint, covert investigation, with Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, to identify, apprehend, prosecute, and convict persons and businesses participating in the unlawful possession, transportation and commercial trade in various species of migratory birds resulted in four defendants being sentenced for illegally selling migratory birds in violation of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act. In total, the four defendants received seven years of probation and



A live, great horned owl, was placed into a box, and sold to an undercover agent during an investigation concerning the trafficking of migratory birds. Photo: USFWS

paid \$7,000 in restitution to a San Antonio based wildlife rehabilitation facility. On several occasions, undercover special agents purchased protected migratory birds, both alive and dead, from the subjects. These birds included three great horned owls, two sharp-shinned hawks, and one red-tailed hawk. The investigation focused on activities, both nationally and internationally, primarily on species of birds listed as migratory birds under State and Federal law. All four subjects pleaded guilty and admitted to the unlawful selling of migratory birds.

Service special agents investigated a subject who was illegally selling dried hummingbird carcasses, referred to as a “chuparosas” or romantic good luck charms. During the course of the investigation, the subject sold 35 hummingbirds to Service undercover agents. The birds had been captured, killed, dried, and preserved, and included four separate species that have shown a significant population decline such as the Rufous hummingbird. These declines are serious because the hummingbird is a pollinator of a diverse array of wildflowers. The subject admitted that he had smuggled 61 dead hummingbirds from Mexico into the United States and that he sold the birds without a valid permit or authorization, which is a felony under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act. He was sentenced to four years of supervised probation, ordered to pay \$5,000 in fines, and a \$1,000 restitution payment to the Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Fund.

In order to protect the authenticity of Native American artwork, promote the economic development of federally recognized Tribes through their arts and crafts market, and ensure the purchaser actually buys genuine Native American made products, Service law enforcement entered into an agreement with the Indian Arts and Crafts Board to enforce laws that regulate this trade.

The Indian Arts and Crafts Board received a complaint that an individual was using a fraudulent Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma enrollment card in conjunction with selling his “Native American artwork.” He created and fraudulently sold paintings, and other artwork, as authentic Indian produced art at art fairs and on the Internet. One of his paintings, “Endless Flame” was sold to an undercover special agent and labeled as painted by “a Cherokee Artist.” The subject pleaded guilty to the charge of misrepresentation of Indian-produced goods and products. He was



The Rufous hummingbird has seen a 62% decline in recent years.
Photo: Dave Menke/USFWS

sentenced to three years of probation, may not sell art during his term of probation unless he notifies buyers that he is not a member of an Indian tribe, must take down his Web site and refrain from advertising or promoting his artwork in any fashion during the

term of probation, and is prohibited from performing flute music publicly during the term of probation unless he notifies the audience that he is not a member of an Indian tribe.



The painting, “Endless Flame” was sold to Service undercover special agents as an authentic piece of Native American art. Photo: USFWS



Midwest Region

The Midwest Region consists of eight States: Minnesota, Wisconsin, Michigan, Iowa, Missouri, Illinois, Indiana, and Ohio. This part of the country is known for its Great Lakes (Superior, Michigan, Huron, and Erie) and “big rivers,” including large portions of both the Missouri and Mississippi. The Region is home to scores of federally protected species, including 41 listed as endangered or threatened under the Endangered Species Act (ESA).

Close coordination on natural resource law enforcement issues occurs with all eight states. Service officers in the Region also work with multiple Federal agencies (such as the National Park Service and the U.S. Forest Service), and the law enforcement program has a strong relationship with 20 tribal conservation agencies and the Great Lakes Indian Fish and Wildlife Commission. Special agents provide investigative assistance to officers at the 54 National Wildlife Refuges managed by the Region and on other public lands in the Midwest. The Region’s wildlife inspectors (stationed in Chicago, Detroit, Port Huron, and Minneapolis/St. Paul) address wildlife trade issues at 39 U.S. Customs’ ports of entry.

Investigations conducted in the Region vary greatly. Agents work with state officers, and other partners, to expose individuals or companies whose illegal commercial activities threaten the viability of fish, wildlife, and plant resources in the Midwest. They investigate the take of eagles, freshwater fish, and other protected species; police migratory game bird hunting; and investigate interstate trafficking in illegally taken big game species.

PHOTO OPPOSITE PAGE: *A piece of carved elephant ivory seized from the Minnesota professor.*
Photo: USFWS



A university professor smuggled and illegally sold a variety of wildlife products that have been valued between \$1.2 million to \$1.5 million. Photo: USFWS

Accomplishments

The discovery and seizure of an outbound shipment of undeclared and mislabeled elephant ivory, by a Service wildlife inspector in Chicago, led to a 4-year investigation that resulted in a Minnesota university professor pleading guilty to elephant ivory and rhinoceros horn trafficking. The investigation revealed an extensive smuggling scheme where he would purchase elephant ivory and rhinoceros horns, beads, and libation cups from numerous sources in the United States and then smuggle the items to his parents in China. His parents would then repair the items, negotiate the listing and sale at numerous Chinese auction houses, and wire the illicit sale proceeds back to the professor to make additional purchases. The value of the illegal wildlife products smuggled and sold has been valued between \$1.2 million to \$1.5 million.

The special agents of this Region investigated several deer trafficking cases. One investigation resulted in three men paying \$1,725,000 in fines and restitution for their role in selling illegal white-tailed deer hunts and for the illegal shipping of deer from Ohio to Florida. This joint investigation with the Ohio Department of Natural Resources Division of Wildlife; the Florida Fish

and Wildlife Conservation Commission; and the Georgia Department of Natural Resources resulted in one of the men sentenced to pay \$1.6 million, the largest sum of money ever ordered of an individual for a wildlife crime in the United States. These men shipped deer herds from their hunting preserve in Ohio to their hunting preserve in Florida. The deer were not certified to be free from chronic wasting disease, tuberculosis, and brucellosis. Wild deer in Florida were potentially exposed to diseases and tuberculosis and brucellosis can transmit to cattle and humans. In addition, they falsified identification tags by placing tags from dead, certified deer, onto the ears of uncertified deer to sell their breeding services; sold illegal deer hunts at their Ohio hunting preserve charging clients from \$1,000 to \$50,000; and also transported the deer trophies back to the hunters’ home in states across the country. In addition to the monetary fines, their sentencing included a total of 21 months in prison, eight months of house arrest, six years of probation, and 250 hours of community service.

A 2-year, covert operation, with the Missouri Department of Conservation and the Illinois Department of Natural Resources focused on ginseng dealers and their alleged Lacey Act violations



Special Agent in Charge (SAC) Greg Jackson has managed Service law enforcement operations in the Midwest Region since 2007. A native of Minnesota, he started his Federal law enforcement career with the U.S. Customs Service in that State in 1991. He joined the Service as a special agent in 1995, and worked for six years as a criminal investigator in Jefferson City, Missouri, and Madison, Wisconsin. In 2001, he became a senior special agent in the program's headquarters office, where he was promoted to serve as SAC of the Branch of Investigations in 2003 and Division Chief for Law Enforcement Operations in 2005. Jackson holds an undergraduate degree in criminal justice from Bemidji State University in Bemidji, Minnesota.

from the illegal harvest and purchase of wild ginseng root out-of-season, in some cases uncertified, and subsequent false reporting offenses. Over 100 law enforcement officers, from Illinois, Missouri, and the Service, simultaneously executed eight search warrants seizing 705 pounds of dried ginseng, 19 firearms, and numerous financial and business records.

Separate investigations discovered violations of Federal acts including the Marine Mammal Protection Act, the ESA, the Lacey Act, and the Indian Arts and Crafts Act. A search warrant was issued on a subject after a 2-year, undercover investigation of a subject who was suspected of illegally buying and selling walrus ivory. During the warrant execution, agents discovered and seized 23 raw walrus ivory tusks hidden under the insulation in the attic of the man's home, knives and swords attached to handles carved from walrus ivory, a walrus skull and tusks, a white rhinoceros shoulder mount, and two rhino horns. The subject admitted to selling scrimshawed ivory that he fraudulently claimed was carved by a Native Alaskan, but actually had been carved by him.

Another seizure of rhinoceros parts involved a controlled delivery of a FedEx package that was shipped from the United Kingdom to a clothing store in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Service special agents intercepted a shipment that contained two rhinoceros feet. One agent posed as a FedEx employee to deliver the package and then executed a search warrant. The rhinoceros feet and data from the business owner's cellular telephone and iPad were seized. Data on the iPad revealed the seller of the rhino feet, the agreed-upon price, and a plan to smuggle the rhino feet into the United States.

"Operation Fishing for Funds," won the regional teamwork award for an investigation that exposed an over-exploitation problem and the valiant efforts to sustain the fisheries resource of the Great Lakes. To date, approximately 6,430 commercial fishing violations have been documented accounting for almost 700,000 pounds of illegal fish. During the course of the operation, 12 Service special agents and two Michigan Department of Natural Resources investigators successfully infiltrated the commercial



A deer trafficking case resulted in one man paying a \$1.6 million fine - the largest sum of money ever ordered of an individual for a wildlife crime in the U.S.

Photo: Brett Billings /USFWS

fishing black market in a covert capacity leaving their normal family lives to live in a covert residence and operate a covert business to document commercial fishermen illegally harvesting and selling lake trout, walleye, lake sturgeon, and other fish species from the Great Lakes region. Additionally, wholesale fish dealers were documented purchasing fish that were harvested from closed waters of the Great Lakes, over their established quotas, and with unauthorized commercial fishing gear. Five search warrants and 100 interviews were conducted in Northeast Wisconsin, the Upper Peninsula of Michigan, and Northern Lower Michigan. The investigative team was assisted by Service special agents from across the country, Homeland Security Investigations, the United States Coast Guard, Michigan Department of Natural Resources, the Michigan State Police, the Great Lakes Indian Fish and Wildlife Commission, Bureau of Indian Affairs, and other member agencies of the Upper Peninsula Substance Enforcement Team. Following this takedown, the investigative team has met and worked with multiple tribal conservation agencies to obtain records and jointly investigate unlawful commercial fishing. The overt portion of this investigation continues to research business records to establish further evidence of falsified purchases, and other illegal activities, by certain wholesale fish dealers who have supported the lucrative and illegal market that has exploited the fisheries resources for decades.



Walrus and rhinoceros parts and products were hidden throughout a subject's home. Photo: USFWS



A covert business was established on tribal land and jointly operated with the Michigan Department of Natural Resources. Photo: USFWS



Several hundred pounds of wild ginseng, and illicit cash, were seized from smugglers in Missouri and Illinois. Photo: USFWS



Southeast Region

The Southeast Region extends from the Appalachian Mountains south to the Caribbean, west to the Ozarks, and includes the southern half of the Mississippi River basin. Special agents conduct investigations in 10 States (Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Tennessee) plus Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands. The Region contains 29 percent of the endangered and threatened species in the United States; 26 percent of the U.S. coastline; 22 percent of U.S. hunting and fishing license holders; and 25 percent of the Nation's population.

The Office of Law Enforcement in the Southeast maintains relationships and coordinates enforcement activities with state counterparts as well as with Federal officers at 128 National Wildlife Refuges, 69 National Parks, and 39 National Forests. Wildlife inspectors monitor wildlife trade and intercept smuggled wildlife at five designated ports: Miami, Florida; Atlanta, Georgia; New Orleans, Louisiana; Louisville, Kentucky; and Memphis, Tennessee. (The latter two are hubs for major international express delivery companies.) Service inspectors also work out of Tampa, Florida, and San Juan, Puerto Rico.

Investigations prioritize crimes involving violations of the Endangered Species Act, Lacey Act, and Migratory Bird Treaty Act. Special agents in the Region, cooperatively work with states to enforce migratory game bird hunting regulations and investigations of large-scale wildlife trafficking. Rapid population growth, which is predicted for the Region over the next two decades, represents a major

PHOTO OPPOSITE PAGE:

Conservation law enforcement officers are assigned to Florida and work cooperatively with state and local water patrols, and the U.S. Coast Guard, to educate the public and enforce regulations to protect manatees.

Photo: Ryan Hagrity/USFWS



Turtles were wrapped in duct tape and placed in socks to escape detection by the United States Postal Service. Photo: USFWS

challenge for both the enforcement program and for wildlife conservation.

Accomplishments

The Southeast Region has conducted many medium and high priority investigations and inspections while continuing to support Service, Federal, state, and foreign partners whenever possible. In 2015, this region opened 1,859 new cases: 136 joint investigations, 15 cases involving the K-9 team, and 346 were classified as high priority investigations.

Due to the location, special agents of this Region investigate a large number of marine wildlife trafficking cases particularly sea turtle and corals. Sea turtle eggs, meat, and products are smuggled into and from the U.S. Eggs are illegally taken from sea turtle nests on U.S. beaches, sea turtle meat is considered a delicacy in some cultures, and parts are used to make a variety of fashion products. Six of the seven sea turtle species are endangered or threatened under the Endangered Species Act.

In 2015, several criminals were sentenced in Federal court, and received prison time, as a result of the diligent casework of special agents. One such case was a multi-year, covert investigation that focused on the international and domestic “supply side” in the black market trade of protected turtle species. Extensive undercover work discovered that large quantities of the illegally turtles were taken in South Carolina and eventually made their way to Asian based buyers and distributors. In 2015, the final six defendants were successfully prosecuted, in Florida and South Carolina, for their roles into the high volume, illegal, turtle trade that spanned from Florida to California to Quanzhou, China. This investigation resulted in the execution of five search warrants, two electronic tracking warrants, and over \$40,000 in asset forfeiture.

A two-year, multi-jurisdictional and international, undercover operation that involved the illegal take, sale, and smuggling of North American wood



Luis Santiago became the Special Agent in Charge for law enforcement operations in the Southeast in 2011 after serving for four years as the Assistant Special Agent in Charge (ASAC) in that Region. Originally from Puerto Rico, Luis joined the Service as a wildlife inspector in Miami in 1986, working in both Miami and Honolulu Ports. He became a special agent in 1995 and conducted criminal investigations for the Service in Miami. He was stationed in Puerto Rico from 1996-2001. After working as a senior special agent in the program's headquarters office from 2001-2004, he became the Resident Agent in Charge for Central and Northern Florida, and served in this supervisory position until being promoted to ASAC in 2007. Santiago holds a B.S. degree in biology from the University of Puerto Rico and completed the Senior Executive Fellows program at Harvard University in 2011. He is also a graduate from the Advance Leadership Development Program, Cohort VI

turtles from the United States to China, through the U.S. Postal Service, resulted in felony indictments for six American citizens, and two foreign nationals. This investigation, worked with the United States Postal Inspection Service and the United States Department of Homeland Security, Homeland Security Investigations, targeted a conspiracy to smuggle \$345,000 worth of illegally caught turtles from Pennsylvania (through Louisiana and California) to Hong Kong. Over the course of the investigation, special agents executed 10 search warrants, seized \$134,000 in cash, and indicted 10 subjects (two men were arrested during a controlled delivery by Hong Kong customs). To date, sentencing totals includes almost five years in prison, nine years of probation, and \$44,000 in fines and restitution.

Service special agents of this Region, with officers from the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, revealed criminal activity into the illegal trade of sea turtle meat. The investigation discovered that at least 15 hawksbill sea turtles and seven green sea turtles were illegally taken and sold for human consumption. As of 2015, the nine subjects charged with 10 felonies and two misdemeanors have been convicted. In addition to the convictions, one vehicle was forfeited to the Service and will be used in future undercover operations.

A repeat poacher was arrested for transporting sea turtle eggs he had illegally collected from a nest on Sapelo Island, Georgia. At the time of his arrest, he was trying to leave the island with a cooler that contained 67 sea turtle eggs and packaged in a manner consistent with the commercialization and distribution of eggs. Special agents discovered that the subject had actually stolen 84 sea turtle eggs from a nest that was under the care of a sea turtle research biologist. Due to mishandling of the eggs, they were no

longer viable, and had to be destroyed. On the black market, loggerhead eggs sell for \$25 per egg. He was also on Federal probation for committing the same offense in 2012, when he stole over 150 loggerhead turtle eggs. In 2015, he was sentenced to serve 21 months in prison.

Coral reefs are highly important. They protect coastlines from the damaging effects of wave action and tropical storms; provide habitats and shelter for marine wildlife; and support more species than any other marine environment. Corals are illegally pilfered by those who harvest coral and often from protected waters where there are many species of rare and colorful corals. Corals often end up as jewelry, used in medicines, and sold into the aquarium trade.

An undercover operation involving the illegal harvest and sale of various marine life from the National Wildlife Refuges, the National Park System, the National Marine Sanctuaries, and other protected areas in or surrounding the Florida Keys, South Florida, and Puerto Rico resulted in the execution of 12 search warrants and 24 individuals and businesses criminally charged for their roles in trafficking



Green sea turtles were illegally taken and sold for human consumption.
Photo: USFWS



Loggerhead sea turtle eggs were illegally collected from a nest.
Photo: Georgia Department of Natural Resources Law Enforcement

corals that were illegally chiseled from the ocean floor with large pieces of live rock attached. Targets ranged throughout the entire span of the industry including the initial harvesters, wholesalers, retailers, smugglers, and public aquariums. Those who have been sentenced have received a combined nine years of incarceration, over 17 years of probation, \$109,000 in fines, and forfeitures of two boats and two vehicles. The investigation discovered that criminals knowingly harvested protected marine-life species including invertebrates, corals, rays, tropical fish, and sharks, from federally owned or administered areas, then exported them using false documents, and unlawfully sold them in interstate commerce in violation of international and Federal law.

No region is exempt from the illegal elephant ivory trade. Special agents of the Southeast are working an on-going, highly complex investigation into the illegal export of elephant ivory from the U.S. primarily to buyers living in China and Hong Kong. The investigation discovered that over 20 individuals and companies had shipped illegal ivory to third party shipping businesses in order to avoid U.S. Federal export requirements. These shipping businesses then repacked and shipped over 230 packages of ivory using erroneous shipper names and return addresses. Highlights of this investigation include intensive electronic surveillance of shipping business, numerous post offices and residences to identify persons involved and their modus operandi; over \$80,000 worth of elephant ivory carvings seized before being smuggled from the U.S.; and a controlled delivery by Chinese law enforcement in Hong Kong and Beijing started an investigation by the Chinese government that led to the arrest of an individual in Hong Kong by the Hong Kong Government. This joint investigation involved several Service special agents, wildlife inspectors, and intelligence analysts who worked with the U.S. Customs and Border Protection officers at the International Sorting Center in Miami, Florida, the United States Department of Homeland Security, and officials from the United States Postal Service.



These live corals were illegally harvested from Key West National Wildlife Refuge. Photo: USFWS



Through intensive surveillance operations, Miami agents, and wildlife inspectors covertly documented multiple commercial shipments of CITES corals found in a commercial airline cargo warehouse prior to its departure and smuggled to South America. Photo: USFWS



Live coral covertly inspected by Miami agents in outbound luggage smuggled to South America. Photo: USFWS



Elephant ivory seized by Miami law enforcement before it was smuggled to China. Photo: USFWS



Northeast Region

The Northeast Region encompasses the eastern seaboard from the mid-Atlantic to New England, including 13 States: Vermont, Maine, Rhode Island, Connecticut, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, New York, New Jersey, Delaware, Maryland, West Virginia, and Virginia. More than 72 million people, about a quarter of the Nation's population, live within this area. The northeast is also "home" to 92 federally protected endangered species and wildlife habitats ranging from northern forests, rolling mountains, and coastal plains to freshwater marshes, barrier beaches, and coastal islands.

Service special agents work with investigative partners in state fish and game agencies and with Federal wildlife officers who police the Region's 535,000 acres of wildlife refuges and other public lands. Wildlife inspectors are stationed at seven U.S. Custom's ports of entry in the Region, including New York and Newark, which together process nearly a third of all U.S. wildlife trade. Inspection services are also provided at the designated ports of Boston and Baltimore, three locations on the Canadian border (Buffalo and Champlain, New York; and Calais, Maine), and at Dulles International Airport outside of Washington, D.C.

Service Law Enforcement in the Northeast focuses on investigations of large-scale illegal commercialization of Federal and state protected species. Some of this work involves foreign or U.S. species moving in the global black market wildlife trade. Challenges also include interstate trafficking in wildlife, injurious species, and habitat modification.

PHOTO OPPOSITE PAGE:

A black bear poacher was sentenced for violating the Lacey Act.

Photo: Traylor Waverly/USFWS



Timber, from the habitat of the last remaining Siberian tigers and Amur leopards in the world, was illegally logged in far eastern Russia. Left Photo: Kevin Law/Wikimedia Commons. Right Photo: John and Karen Hollingsworth/USFWS

Accomplishments

A multi-year, Service-led joint investigation, with the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, resulted in the first felony conviction related to the import or use of illegal timber and the largest criminal fine ever under the Lacey Act. The investigation discovered that Lumber Liquidators knowingly imported Mongolian Oak flooring made from illegally sourced timber from the Russian Far East and home to the last remaining wild Siberian tigers and Amur leopards in the world. Under the plea agreement, Lumber Liquidators will pay \$13.15 million, including \$7.8 million in criminal fines, \$969,175 in criminal forfeiture, and more than \$1.23 million in community service payments. Lumber Liquidators has also agreed to a five-year term of organizational probation and mandatory implementation of a government-approved, environmental compliance plan, and independent audits.

A multi-year, Service investigation, with the Maryland Department of Natural Resources, involving the illegal harvest and interstate trafficking of striped bass taken from the Chesapeake Bay resulted in the successful prosecution of two boat captains and two fishermen. They were sentenced in Federal court for their roles in the scheme that took more than 92 tons

of illegally caught striped bass, worth almost \$500,000, from the Chesapeake Bay from 2007 to 2011. The investigation began when the Maryland Department of Natural Resources found thousands of pounds of striped bass snagged in illegal, anchored nets before the season opened and discovered the fishermen had illegally harvested over 185,000 pounds of striped bass in violation of Maryland's regulations. They also sold the illegal fish for \$498,293 and shipped the product to wholesalers in Maryland, New York, Pennsylvania, and Delaware. In total, the four fishermen were sentenced to 31 months in prison, 72 months of probation, fined \$95,000, and paid \$1,046,586 in restitution to the State of Maryland.

A Federal jury, in Bangor, Maine, convicted a narwhal ivory trafficker on six counts, including conspiracy, smuggling violations for buying and illegally importing narwhal tusks into the United States, and money-laundering violations associated with the illegal importations. The market value of the illegally imported teeth and tusks was between \$120,000 and \$200,000. According to the evidence presented at trial, the subject had purchased approximately 33 narwhal tusks over a six-year span from two Canadian co-defendants. These co-defendants had purchased the narwhal tusks in Canada; illegally brought them into the United



Special Agent in Charge Honnie Gordon has directed law enforcement operations for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in the Northeast since August 2013. A native of Pennsylvania, she served previously as the Assistant Special Agent in Charge for the Mountain-Prairie Region and headed up the Service's law enforcement training program. Her experience as a criminal investigator includes work with the Service Office of Law Enforcement in Florida, Georgia, and Arizona as well as service as a special agent with the U.S. Forest Service in Virginia and Louisiana and with what was the U.S. Customs Service in San Antonio, Texas.



Over 185,000 pounds of striped bass were illegally harvested from the Chesapeake Bay. Photo: USFWS



Six narwhal tusks were forfeited by the trafficker. Photo: USFWS

States by concealing the tusks either under a truck, or under their trailer; and did not declare the wildlife to border officials as required. The subject was sentenced to 33 months in prison; ordered to forfeit \$85,089, six narwhal tusks, and one narwhal skull; and fined \$7,500. The Canadian supplier, and main trafficker in the case is pending extradition to the U.S. for his role in smuggling approximately 250 narwhal tusks into the United States between 2003 and 2009 valued at more than a million dollars. Two additional U.S. defendants also pleaded guilty and are awaiting sentencing.

A Service investigation involving the illegal take and interstate trafficking of state and Federally protected reptiles resulted in the sentencing of a New Jersey man to a term of supervised probation of five years, 150 hours of community service, and payment of a \$30,450 to the Service's Lacey Act Reward Fund. The investigation revealed the subject utilized

the Internet to advertise a variety of turtles for sale from his home in New Jersey. He would ship the turtles to purchasers in New York by placing the turtles in tube socks, tying the socks to restrict their movements, placing the socks into boxes, and then shipping these boxes. The boxes were not designed for live animal shipments and several turtles died in transit. Species of turtles he sold included spotted turtles, North American wood turtles, and Eastern box turtles. New Jersey has designated the North American wood turtle as threatened and the spotted turtle and Eastern box turtle are listed by the State as a species of special concern.

A joint Service investigation, with the New Jersey Division of Fish and Wildlife, resulted in a New Jersey man sentenced for violating two counts of the Lacey Act for black bear poaching. The investigation revealed he had knowingly poached a record-breaking American black bear in New Jersey out of season, with an illegal weapon, over bait, and in a restricted area. He then transported the massive, 450-pound bear to a weigh station in New York, where he created false records by claiming the bear was lawfully hunted in New York. When he realized he was being investigated, he transported the gut pile of the bear to New York, staged a fake kill-site, and showed it to New Jersey Division of Fish and Wildlife investigators in an effort to thwart the investigation. He was sentenced to a 3-year probation, must publish a public apology in the New Jersey Division of Fish and Wildlife Hunting and Trapping Digest, pay \$5,000 to the Lacey Act Rewards fund, pay \$1,250 to the Woodlands Wildlife Refuge for the care of injured and orphaned American black bears in New Jersey, and lost his ability to hunt, fish, and trap in all 50 states during his supervision.

The diverse work of special agents in this Region is highlighted by three joint investigations with the New York Department of Environmental Conservation. The first case concerns sharks; the second, snakes; and the third, bald eagles. Total sentencing includes almost three years in prison and \$16,000 in fines.

The first successful prosecution under a New York State law that bans the possession, sale, and distribution of most shark species in the State began when a large shipment of dried shark fins was seized at John F. Kennedy International Airport. The paperwork claimed the shark fins originated from South Africa, but many of the identified protected shark species, including hammerhead, grey sharpnose, broadfin, and blacktip reef sharks, are not found in South African waters. From this investigation, a Brooklyn seafood company pleaded guilty to shark fin trafficking.

Two Florida men were sentenced for collecting protected snakes from the wild in Pennsylvania and New Jersey, purchasing protected timber rattlesnakes that had been illegally collected from the wild in New York, and transporting Eastern indigo snakes from Florida to Pennsylvania. Evidence at the trial indicated that the timber rattlesnakes were to be sold at a European reptile show (valued at \$800 each); the Eastern



Eastern box turtles are poached for overseas buyers. Photo: National Park Service, via Wikimedia Commons

indigos were intended for domestic sale (valued at \$1,000 each); and in addition to their snake trafficking, the defendants attempted to persuade a witness not to provide the government with information concerning their illegal activities.

A New York farmer pleaded guilty to violating the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act for placing a contaminated meat pile, mixed with an insecticide, in a cornfield in an attempt to kill

coyotes, but three juvenile bald eagles died after ingesting the poisoned meat. The defendant also knowingly moved the three dead bald eagles and the contaminated meat pile from his field.



Scalloped hammerhead sharks are one of the only endangered shark species. Photo: NOAA



Mountain-Prairie Region

Eight States comprise the Mountain-Prairie Region: Montana, Wyoming, Colorado, Utah, North Dakota, South Dakota, Nebraska, and Kansas. Its lands include the short grass prairies of the Great Plains to the east as well as the Rocky Mountains and parts of the inter-mountain west beyond the Continental Divide. The Region's Prairie Coteau, an area in eastern Montana and the Dakotas, features ponds and wetlands left by the Ice Age and are among the most important nesting habitat for waterfowl in North America.

The Region is home to 94 federally threatened and endangered species and an array of other Federal and state protected species. Its predominantly semi-arid to arid climate makes existing surface waters all the more vital for wildlife. The natural resources in the Region are under significant pressure from many different resource exploration and production activities. The Rocky Mountains are well known for big game species such as moose, elk, mule deer, mountain goats, and bighorn sheep. The Service's special agents in this Region work closely with Federal and state counterparts to ensure future generations of hunters and wildlife viewers have opportunities to enjoy these majestic creatures.

Iconic species in the Region include the grizzly bear, gray wolf, golden and bald eagle, greater sage grouse, and whooping crane. Service special agents investigate violations committed by industries or individuals whose activities conflict with Federal wildlife laws. Wildlife inspectors are stationed in the Region to police wildlife trade at the international airport in Denver and along an extensive expanse of the Nation's northern border. The Region also manages the Service's National Wildlife Property and Eagle Repositories.

PHOTO OPPOSITE PAGE:

A bull moose feeding in a lake.

Photo: Ronald L. Bell USFWS



A subject paid \$15,000 in restitution for killing three grizzly bears cubs.

Photo: USFWS

Accomplishments

Grizzly bears are protected by Federal and state law in this area and classified as a threatened species. In 2015, 23 grizzly bear death investigations were opened. In one case, a Montana man shot and killed three, two-year-old sibling grizzly bear cubs when they were on his property killing his chickens. He was sentenced to a three years probation and ordered to pay \$15,000 restitution to Montana Fish, Wildlife, & Parks. Another case involved a Blackfeet Tribal member who shot and killed three grizzly bears near his residence. He claimed he shot in self-defense; however, the first bear was shot at a range of 300 feet; the second bear was shot at 500 yards; and the third was shot at 500 yards after it had left and returned an hour later to the site where the other two grizzlies lay dead. He was ordered to pay \$30,000 restitution and placed on unsupervised probation until restitution was paid in full.

Two wind power facility investigations were opened in 2015 and another six wind power facility investigations continued throughout the year. The eight cases have documented the mortality of golden eagles, Swainson's

hawks, lark buntings, Savannah sparrows, red-tailed hawks, and hoary bats.

A Utah man was investigated for pursuing and kicking a barn owl while piloting his para-glider, after a video of his activities was posted on YouTube. He pleaded guilty to violating the Airborne Hunting Act and Migratory Bird Treaty Act and was sentenced to 12 months of unsupervised probation, ordered to pay \$100 assessment fee, and to forfeit the parasail valued at \$5000.

An outfitting and guide service in Colorado was the subject of a joint federal-state investigation for trapping and wounding mountain lions. The subjects' criminal activity involved trapping and holding mountain lions in cages, as well as shooting the cats in the paws, stomach, and legs, or attaching leg-hold traps to injure and tether the cats. These actions shortened the client's hunts allowing for more hunts and more profit. Overall, eight persons were sentenced or paid violation notices for a total of 27 months of incarceration, 7 ½ years probation, \$19,625 in fines and fees, forfeiture of a vehicle, 140 hours community



Steve Oberholtzer is the Special Agent in Charge for the law enforcement program in the Service's Mountain-Prairie Region, where he oversees investigations and inspections in eight states and manages the Service's National Eagle and Wildlife Property Repositories. Before taking on the challenges of his current position, Oberholtzer worked as the Assistant Special Agent in Charge for Alaska and held special agent (criminal investigator) positions in Virginia, Maryland, California, and Ohio. He started his career with the Service as a wildlife inspector in 1989, working in this capacity in both New York City and Alaska. Oberholtzer holds a bachelor's degree in wildlife biology from the University of Massachusetts and served 4 years active duty in the U.S. Marine Corps from 1981-1985.



Service OLE works with wind power companies to reduce migratory bird mortalities such as this golden eagle. Photo: USFWS

service, one lifetime suspension of hunting and fishing privileges (with a second lifetime suspension pending), and 35 years suspension of hunting and fishing privileges. One subject is yet to be sentenced.

A Glasgow, Montana man pleaded guilty to the unlawful killing of a golden eagle. He set bait stations too close to a snare trap that violated State regulations. For his actions, which caused the eagle to be strangled by the trap, he was sentenced to a \$3,000 fine and \$3,000 in restitution to the Montana Raptor Conservation Center.

In an unusual case, seven offspring from a rare, white, boa constrictor that were illegally taken from the wild in Brazil and smuggled into the United States, were repatriated to Brazil. The repatriation was made possible after a joint FBI and Service investigation, which was performed at the request of the Brazilian government. The Utah reptile dealer, who sold each boa for \$35,000, was sentenced to 12 months of home confinement, had his import/export license revoked, and had to forfeit the boa's offspring.

A deer poaching investigation involved a group of five individuals, four from Missouri and one from Kansas, who poached almost 100 deer in Kansas, including on the Quivira National Wildlife Refuge. Most of the deer were trophy class bucks that were unlawfully shot at night with the aid of spotlights. One of the



Mountain lions were injured before orchestrated hunts. Photo: USFWS

men stole a 20-foot trailer and two farm tractors disappeared with implements, which were recovered by Service agents with assistance from the FBI's Violent Crimes Task Force. The "ringleader" pleaded guilty to transportation of stolen vehicles and conspiracy to violate the Lacey Act. He was sentenced to four years of probation, ordered to pay \$11,894 in fines and restitution, and all of the property was seized.

Service law enforcement, with over 200 personnel from the Colorado Parks & Wildlife, Colorado State Patrol, Clear Creek Sheriff's Office, U.S. Forest Service, Utah Division of Wildlife Resources, Wyoming Game and Fish Department,

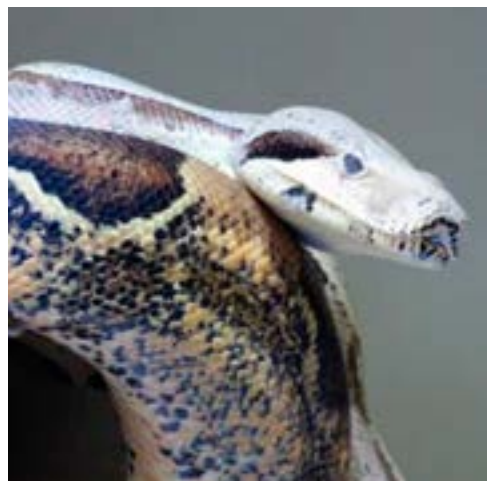
Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks and Tourism, and Idaho Springs Police Department, conducted a 36-hour game stop at the Interstate 70 Twin Tunnels Check Station. Over 1,000 cars were inspected, 1,900 hunters were checked, numerous citations were issued, and \$30,000 in fines collected.

The National Eagle & Wildlife Property Repository maintained 1,264,229 pieces of inventory. Over 753 individuals toured the facility including U.S. Government and foreign national officials. Thirteen media interviews were provided including the American Broadcasting Company, the National Broadcasting Company, National Public Radio, China TV, and Australian Broadcasting.

The Eagle Repository was very active receiving and filling requests for bald and golden eagles and their parts. In 2015, 3,678 orders were filled and 4,155 new requests were received.



An eagle died from being caught in an illegal trap. Photo: USFWS



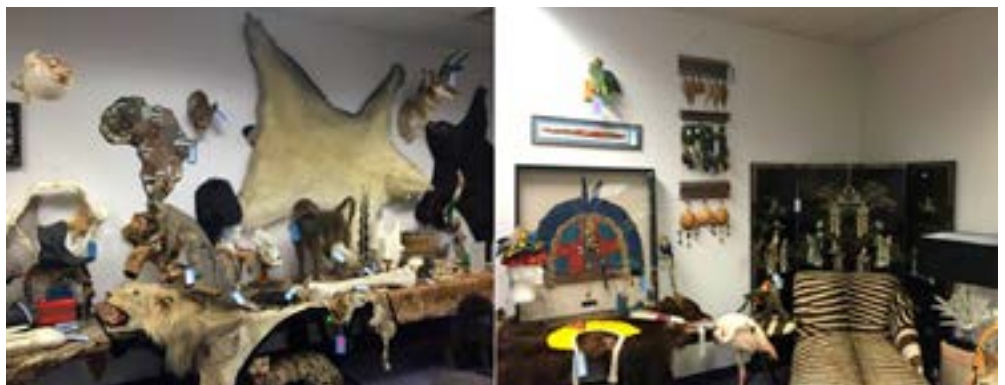
One of the rare white boas that was returned to Brazil. Photo: U.S. Department of Justice



A guilty plea was entered for deer poaching. Photos: USFWS



Over 1,000 vehicles were inspected during a joint operation. Photos: USFWS



In 2015, the Repository housed 1,264,229 pieces of wildlife products. Photo: USFWS



Alaska Region

The Alaska Region encompasses over 220 million acres of Federal and State lands (including 15 National Wildlife Refuges as well as multiple National Parks and Preserves) managed in the interests of resource conservation. The State, which features intact ecosystems and robust fish and wildlife populations, provides multi-billion dollar commercial fisheries, sought-after hunting and wildlife viewing opportunities, sustainable local food systems, cultural resources, and unparalleled ecotourism opportunities.

The law enforcement program helps safeguard scores of federally protected species including eight listed as endangered or threatened under the Endangered Species Act (ESA). Several ESA protected species in Alaska, such as the polar bear and the Steller's eider, are impacted by subsistence hunting and industrial development, which require significant outreach, education, and enforcement from the Service law enforcement program.

In addition to safeguarding federally protected species, Service law enforcement teams work with Alaska Native communities on subsistence and enforcement issues. Service special agents conduct investigations and deal with compliance matters from the arctic tundra to the Aleutian coastline.

Stationed in Anchorage, the Region's wildlife inspectors monitor trade at five of the State's U.S. Custom's ports of entry. Unlawful commercial exploitation of wildlife is a major focus for investigative work. Service law enforcement in the Region has a long history of successful partnerships with the Alaska Wildlife Troopers and with other Federal, State, and local conservation enforcement agencies. Enforcement challenges include protecting migratory birds and marine mammals such as walrus and polar bear.



A caribou in Alaska.
Photo: Karen Laubenstein/USFWS

Accomplishments

Service law enforcement, in Alaska, worked with Federal and State counterparts to foil illegal commercial big game hunting operations. In 2015, three complex investigations were prosecuted: Operation Syndicate, Operation Bruin, and Operation Fair Chase Hunts.

Operation Syndicate resulted in nine Federal convictions; \$208,250 in fines; \$59,500 in restitution to the Noatak National Preserve; and over \$200,000 worth of seizures, including 28 illegally killed wildlife trophies and an SQ 4 Stol Quest aircraft. The joint investigation, with the National Park Service, discovered that the host of a cable television hunting show, titled *Syndicate Hunting*, and nine other individuals illegally guided and hunted in the Preserve, where they killed dozens of big game animals including grizzly bear, moose, caribou, and Dall sheep.

Operation Bruin involved the illegal take of brown bears and mountain goats. One of the guides, who was sentenced for felony violations in U.S. Federal court last year, was prosecuted and sentenced in Canada for related offenses receiving 10 years of probation, a \$20,000 fine, and the forfeiture of a number of wildlife trophies. The other guide was sentenced in U.S. court to four years of probation, a \$2,000 fine, the forfeiture of wildlife trophies, and he is not allowed to hunt, guide, or accompany anyone hunting worldwide. In addition, two of the clients paid a total of \$5,500 in fines for their role in the violations associated with this case.

The final defendant from Operation Fair Chase Hunts was sentenced for his role in illegal guiding violations on the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. Sixteen subjects were convicted of 116 violations of the Lacey Act, National Wildlife Refuge Act, and Alaska State law related to the unlawful take of Dall sheep, grizzly bear, and caribou. Penalties included \$273,000 in criminal fines directed to the Lacey Act Reward Fund; \$22,500 in non-criminal payments directed to the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation and Alaska Fish and Wildlife Safeguard; 31 years suspension of hunting, guiding, and outfitting privileges; and the forfeiture of four Dall sheep, two grizzly bears, one caribou, and one rifle.

As climate change diminishes the summer sea ice, the future of walrus is a major concern for Service law enforcement in Alaska. Record low sea ice is causing walrus to haul-out on shore in record numbers. These haul-outs are highly susceptible to disturbance and stampeding which can cause major mortality events for calves, cows, and young bulls. Near Cape Lisburne, numerous walrus died during a stampede that started when hunters began shooting at the animals. This is a significant investigation because it is the first time a large-scale walrus stampede could be attributed

PHOTO OPPOSITE PAGE: A
Pacific walrus bull is hauled out on the ice in coastal Alaska waters
Photo: Joel Garlich-Miller/USFWS



Ryan Noel became the Special Agent in Charge (SAC) in Alaska in 2014. He began his career with the Service in 1997 as an assistant refuge manager and refuge officer at Hobe Sound National Wildlife Refuge. He then worked in management position in South Carolina and Colorado before joining the Office of Law Enforcement as a special agent in 2004. As an agent, Ryan was stationed in Nashville, Tennessee where he worked pesticide and Lacey Act cases before opening a new office in Knoxville. In the Smokey Mountains, he worked with Federal and State partners to curtail the trafficking of American ginseng and black bears. In 2009, Ryan became the Resident Agent in Charge for Tennessee and Kentucky. In 2012, he was selected as the Assistant Special Agent in Charge of the Alaska Region where he served until 2014 when he became the SAC. Ryan is a native of Pennsylvania where he grew up hunting and fishing in the coal-mining region of the Allegheny Mountains. He graduated with degrees in wildlife technology from Penn State University and biology from Slippery Rock University.

to specific hunters. The Service is working with the United States Attorney's Office to prosecute the case.

In addition to investigating walrus mortalities, Service law enforcement is proactive in preventing these mortalities. With Marine Mammals Management, Alaska special agents worked with marine shipping companies, airlines, and other interested groups to avoid disturbing a herd of approximately 35,000 walrus hauled-out near Point Lay. They also protect the future of walrus by working with the Eskimo Walrus Commission, an organization that represents Alaska's coastal walrus hunting communities. Service law enforcement supported a National Fish and Wildlife Foundation grant that provided funding for the creation of additional local village ordinances limiting the number of walrus that subsistence hunters can take. Polar bear protection is also a priority for Service law enforcement. Law Enforcement, Marine Mammals Management, and the Alaska Nanuq Commission are working on implementing a treaty between the United States and the Russian Federation to conserve the shared polar bear population in the Chukchi Sea. In furtherance of the implementation, a special agent joined the U.S. delegation that attended an international bi-lateral polar bear meeting in Sochi, Russia in September of 2015.

In addition to working to limit the illegal take of marine mammals, special agents routinely investigate and prosecute the illegal sale of marine mammal products. For example, special agents are working with the U.S. Attorney's office to prosecute the illegal sale of a walrus head-mount and a polar bear hide that were recently purchased during two separate undercover operations



An Alaskan brown bear.
Photo: Bret Greenheck/USFWS



This SQ 4 Stolquest aircraft, valued at \$200,000, was forfeited. Photo: USFWS



Illegally taken wildlife were made into trophies. Photo: USFWS

in Anchorage. Further, Alaska agents and inspectors participated in a major takedown in Hawaii related to the illegal purchase, export, import, and resale of Alaska walrus ivory.

In order to conserve migratory birds, but also allow for native subsistence and artwork, Service law enforcement in Alaska worked with multiple Federal, State, tribal, and local partners to issue guidance and regulations. Special agents are working collaboratively with the Alaska Migratory Bird Co-management Council (AMBCC) to implement provisions of the Migratory Bird Treaty with Canada that may provide for a limited sale of Alaska Native handicrafts containing parts of migratory birds taken during subsistence harvests in Alaska. In addition, agents are working with the AMBCC and Native and rural residents to develop a limited subsistence harvest of emperor geese. This would be the first such hunt in over 30 years.

Agents also helped to draft guidance implementing a 2014 amendment to



Hunters caused a stampede that killed 13 adults walrus and 12 pups. Photo: USFWS

the Duck Stamp Act that allows rural Alaskans to hunt migratory waterfowl without purchasing a Federal duck stamp. They also investigated the illegal take of emperor geese by several subjects, investigated subjects who hit and killed several eagles with their vehicle, and worked with National Marine Fisheries Service agents to investigate the take of two ESA listed short-tailed albatross by a long line fishing vessel.

Aviation is a necessary component of law enforcement in Alaska and several special agents are pilots. King salmon numbers have been decreasing on the Kuskokwim River and only a very limited subsistence harvest has been allowed for the past several years; this makes enforcement of these fishing regulations one of the Service's highest priorities in Alaska. Special agents and a special agent pilot assisted enforcement efforts on the Kuskokwim River using Service aircraft which is an effective way to enforce regulations on such a large and remote river.

Alaska law enforcement was active with community outreach and education. Special agents and inspectors participated in events with the University of Alaska Fairbanks, Alaska Native Studies Department; The University of Alaska Anchorage, Women in Law Enforcement Group; the Native American Fish and Wildlife Society's national conference; and military conservation officers from Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson in Anchorage and Fort Wainwright in Fairbanks. Further, agents and inspectors provided training and presentations to a delegation of Indonesian prosecutors that focused on conservation and wildlife prosecutions. In addition to outreach and education, Service special agents had the honor of assisting the U.S. Secret Service in providing marine protection for the President of the United States when he visited Resurrection Bay, near Seward, Alaska.



Special agents initiated an investigation after seeing pictures of hunters with emperor geese on a Facebook page. Photo: USFWS



Chinook salmon, often called king salmon, is the largest of the salmon species. Photo: USFWS



Pacific Southwest Region

Service law enforcement officers in the Pacific Southwest investigate wildlife crimes in California and Nevada as well as the Klamath Basin. They are responsible for one of the most ecologically diverse areas in the United States. Their “beats” range from arid sand dunes and snow-capped crags in the high Sierras to rich farmland and rain-soaked redwood forests. This incredibly diverse geography provides habitat for a vast array of wildlife, including more than 309 federally threatened and endangered species.

Service special agents work cooperatively with the California Department of Fish and Wildlife, the Nevada Department of Wildlife, and with other Federal and state entities to enforce wildlife laws on more than 19 National Forests, 28 National Parks, 46 National Wildlife Refuges, and more than 63 million acres of other public lands and state-protected areas. The Region’s wildlife inspectors monitor wildlife trade at some of the busiest land, sea, and air border crossings in the world – including San Ysidro, the largest land border crossing in the country, and Los Angeles, the second busiest U.S. port for the importation of wildlife shipments.

Conservation enforcement issues in the Region range from the growing impact of renewable energy projects on wildlife resources to illegal trade in “commodities” that include global and state wildlife resources barred from import, export, or commercial exploitation. Partnership efforts with the states and other Federal agencies include joint investigations, cooperative training, and compliance outreach.

PHOTO OPPOSITE PAGE: *An innovative settlement with a wind power energy company will protect golden eagles from future mortalities.* Photo: USFWS

Accomplishments

Conserving wildlife is a priority for Service law enforcement. Special agents in this Region protect a variety of species and have created new tools and techniques to support this goal. In a “First of its Kind of Settlement,” the Service entered into innovative settlement agreements with three large-scale industrial wind energy developers to address past unpermitted take of golden eagles while ensuring further protection of eagles and other migratory birds. Together, the three civil settlements have addressed eagle take at 14 different wind energy facilities and resulted in applications for eagle take permits and commitments to implement best management practices by those facilities. The settlements resulted in financial reparations of \$50,000 for illegal past take of eagles, and additional investments by the companies of more than \$1.7 million for peer-reviewed research and development technologies or practices that reduce or eliminate risks to eagles from wind turbines. The companies are also required to “diligently pursue” Federal eagle take permits from the Service for each wind energy project covered by the settlement.

Service law enforcement also conserves wildlife by working with partners. In cooperation with the Los Angeles Zoo, the successful hatching of three Gray’s monitor lizard eggs was very exciting. These hatchlings are significant because this species of monitor lizard is highly difficult to keep long term in captivity and successful reproduction is even more challenging. In fact, the last successful hatching of a Gray’s monitor in the Western world was a single egg that hatched at the Dallas Zoo 20 years ago. This cooperative work started when the Service interdicted and seized a group of Gray’s monitor lizards that were unlawfully brought into the United States. Working with the Association of Zoos and Aquariums, the Service transferred the group of monitors to the Los Angeles Zoo. These endangered lizards, endemic to the Philippines, are one of the only three known fruit eating monitor lizards and were believed to have



Gray’s monitor lizards were thought to have been extinct in the wild for 130 years until being rediscovered in the 1980s. Photo: USFWS

been extinct for 130 years before being rediscovered in the 1980s.

A growing concern is the use of wildlife in “traditional Asian medicinals.” These medicinals are often very difficult to find since they can be small in size and are smuggled in a variety of methods. To understand the magnitude of this issue, Service law enforcement conducted a multi-agency operation that thoroughly screened passenger baggage from flights that originated in China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan. Approximately 5,500 bags were searched discovering medicinals that contained various species protected by the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), the Endangered Species Act (ESA), the Rhinoceros and Tiger Act, the California Fish and Game Code, and United States Department of Agriculture laws. Species such as musk deer, agar wood, deer horn, tiger, shark fin, and ray fin were discovered in the medicinals.



Jill Birchell has been the Special Agent in Charge of California and Nevada since 2011. A 28-year veteran officer, she has worked in four Service Regions from Alaska to the Southwest to Washington, DC. She has investigated and overseen a wide variety of investigations, including big game hunting guides in Alaska, industrial take of eagles and other protected birds, endangered species take and habitat destruction cases, wildlife smuggling, and timber cases under the Lacey Act plant amendments of 2008. She also served as a Special Assistant U.S. Attorney in the Alaska U.S. Attorney's office for wildlife prosecutions as a collateral duty to her special agent field duties. She started her career with the Service as a wildlife inspector in Detroit, Michigan. Birchell has a B.S. in wildlife management from the Ohio State University and a J.D. from the University of Detroit, Mercy School of Law..

Service law enforcement addresses the issue of repeat violators within the import/export community by working closely with the regional solicitor. A settlement agreement was executed by the Office of the Solicitor, San Francisco Field Office, with a commercial reptile importer/exporter who had a previous record of CITES violations. The agreement states that the subject will admit to the violations, enter a compliance program regarding the export or re-export of any wildlife, and pay a civil penalty of \$5,000.

The dedicated work of this Region resulted in several violators being sentenced for wildlife crimes including the smuggling, illegal trade, or take of totoaba, sea cucumbers, abalone, turtles, Asian arawana, sea otter, Brazilian rosewood seeds, and orchids.

In Southern California, Service special agents, with special agents from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, executed an arrest warrant for an individual charged with conspiracy, smuggling, and violations of the Lacey Act regarding the illegal trafficking of totoaba swim bladders, sea cucumber, and abalone. The subject was sentenced to six months of home detention, fined \$2,000, and ordered to pay \$5,000 in restitution to the National Commission of Aquaculture and Fishing (CONAPESCA) in Mexico. In addition, his company was sentenced to three years of probation, fined \$12,500, and ordered to pay \$50,000 in restitution to PROFEPA (the Mexican Federal Attorney General for Environmental Protection) for the illegal importation of the totoaba bladders.

A Service law enforcement investigation discovered that a subject was smuggling live turtles, via the United States Postal Service, to China. He pleaded guilty to felony violations of the Lacey Act for failing to properly label shipments of wildlife intended for export. The smuggler was sentenced to serve two months imprisonment, followed by an additional two months in a residential re-entry center and two years of supervised release; fined \$12,000; and ordered to perform 500 hours of community service at an animal shelter.

One subject, who knowingly killed a threatened Southern sea otter in violation of the ESA, was sentenced to a \$500 fine, 150 hours of community service, 6 months of probation, and had to forfeit his air rifle that was used to shoot the sea otter.



Traditional Asian medicinals often contain endangered wildlife as ingredients. Photo: USFWS



241 dried totoaba swim bladders were discovered inside of one subject's house. Photo: Homeland Security Investigations

In addition to investigating crimes against wildlife, Service special agents also enforced regulations for crimes related to endangered plants. One investigation revealed that an individual attempted to smuggle almost 15,000 Brazilian rosewood seeds from the United States to Fiji. In addition to supervised release, the subject was sentenced to pay a \$100,000 fine, the maximum fine allowed under the ESA. The investigation began when Service special agents, with United States Customs and Border Protection (CBP) officers, stopped the subject as he was about to board an international flight to Fiji and found more than 7,000 seeds hidden inside of motorcycle and airplane parts, his luggage and wallet, and inside of a drink bottle. The investigation further revealed that the subject had almost 15,000 seeds, with which he had hoped to start a Brazilian rosewood tree plantation in Fiji. Ultimately, he wanted to harvest and sell the rare, endangered

wood to guitar manufacturers. Brazilian rosewood is a slow growing tree, native to the Amazon basin in Brazil. It is known for its unique hard wood, sells on the black market for thousands of dollars per board, and is one species so endangered that it is provided the highest level of protection under CITES.

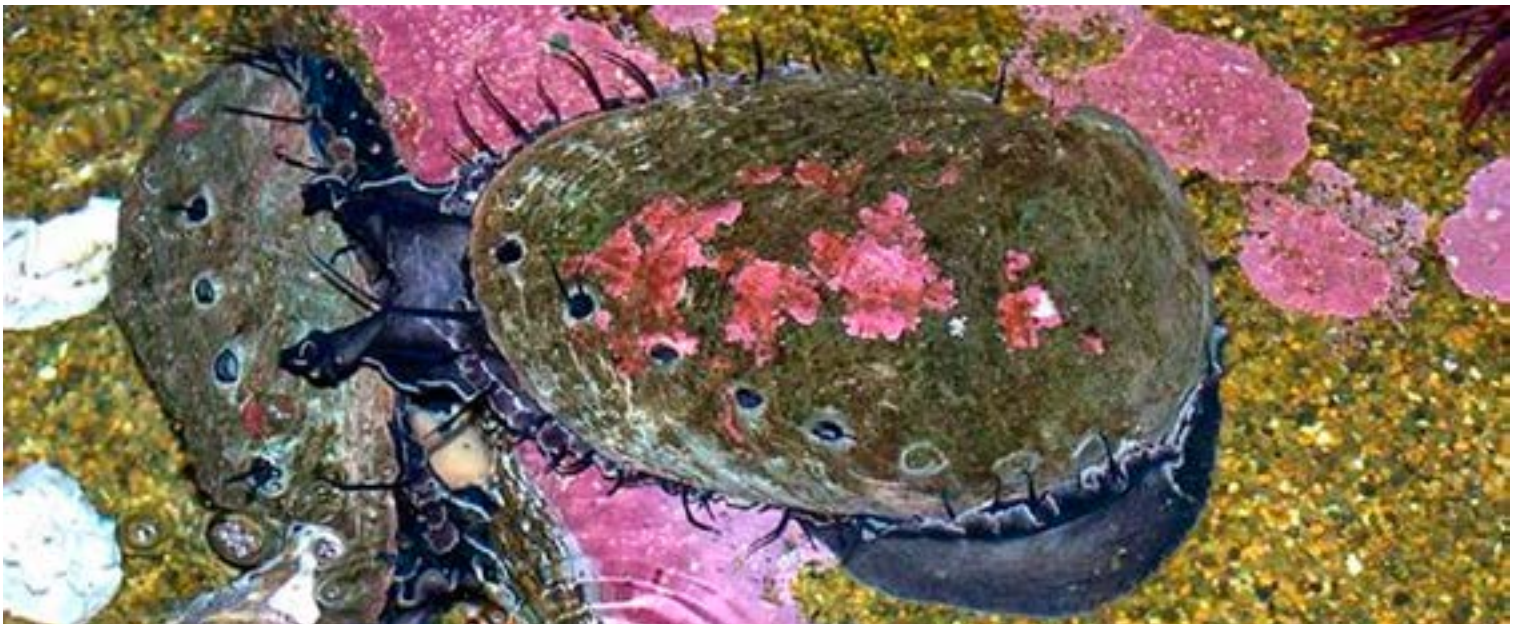
Another plant investigation with the CBP concerned a Peruvian national who tried to import orchids from Australia. The subject had approximately 200 live orchid plants concealed in his luggage. The orchids were sewn inside of pillows, and also hidden inside tissue boxes, toys, and picture tube containers. The subject was apprehended at Los Angeles International Airport when he arrived in the U.S. on his way back to Peru. He ultimately pleaded guilty to a misdemeanor charge of unlawfully trading in CITES protected species, and was sentenced to two years of probation and a \$7,500 fine to be paid to the Lacey Act Reward Fund. His father, also involved in orchid smuggling, fled the country in 2004 to avoid serving 21 months of incarceration for similar illegal activities, and is currently an international fugitive.



Brazilian rosewood seeds were smuggled included being hidden inside of an airplane parts. Photo: USFWS



Sea cucumbers and abalone are delicacies in Asia. Photo: USFWS





Wildlife Inspection Program

The Office of Law Enforcement's Wildlife Inspection Program provides the Nation's frontline defense against illegal wildlife trafficking. Wildlife inspectors uphold the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) and enforce U.S. laws that regulate wildlife imports and exports.

In FY 2015, Service inspectors policed wildlife trade at 18 designated ports and 36 other locations. They examined almost 194,000 shipments, monitoring a \$6.2 billion legal trade for compliance with wildlife laws. Inspectors also conducted proactive operations targeting contraband that ranged from beauty products containing sturgeon caviar in Baltimore to live birds in the Port of New Orleans, Louisiana.

Wildlife Detector Dog Program

In 2015, the Service inspector and canine teams at the ports of Miami, Chicago, and Los Angeles continued to inspect air and ocean cargo and international mail shipments to detect wildlife smuggling. These wildlife inspector handler and K-9 teams are able to examine a greater volume of international cargo, and as a result of their seizures, Service special agents have opened new investigations that have led to additional arrests and



K-9 wildlife detector dog, "Locket" sniffed out an illegal alligator skull that was hidden inside of a vehicle.

Photo: USFWS

prosecutions. For example, during a routine inspection at Los Angeles International Airport, K-9 "Locket," and her wildlife inspector handler, discovered a shipment of undeclared sea urchins that were to be exported to South Korea. Locket also discovered an undeclared alligator skull and a bear mandible that were hidden inside boxes, in a vehicle that was entering the U.S. through a border crossing, ultimately destined for Mongolia.

Since the inception of the K-9 program in the spring of 2014, these highly trained K-9 teams have detected wildlife in over 430 shipments of imports and exports with an approximate total of 360 pounds of illegal or undeclared wildlife products that were refused clearance. Due to the success of this program, the Service plans to double the wildlife inspector-canine teams in 2016.

Partnerships and Compliance Outreach

Inspectors work closely with U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) and other Federal inspection agencies. At many ports, they provide cross training to these officers as well as international counterparts. The Service also cross-trained new agriculture inspectors and military customs officers. For example, an inspector from the Mountain-Prairie Region conducted a presentation for U.S. Military Customs Inspectors at

the Minot, North Dakota, Air Force Base. The training included outlining U.S. wildlife statutes, regulations, and treaties, as well as regulations that interplay with international trafficking of wildlife species. The wildlife inspector also covered seizure protocols and addressed smuggling techniques that have been used to elude detection during inspections to U.S. military customs inspectors.

The Miami service K-9 and wildlife inspector team, worked a joint operation with a joint operation with K-9 teams from CBP and the Florida Fish and Wildlife Game Commission. Under "Operation Cast Net," these law enforcement K-9 teams proactively performed baggage inspections and targeted commercial and private flights from the Caribbean, Mexico, Central and South America, and some European countries, in response to a remarkable increase of illegal wildlife intercepted at the airport in Fort Lauderdale, which is not a port designated by the Service to import and export wildlife.

To assist inspectors in locating organic contraband behind non-metallic surfaces; detect organic threats and explosives; and illegal wildlife in packages and cargo, OLE staff at the Ports of Atlanta, Louisville, Memphis, and New Orleans received training in the use of the "Mini Z" handheld screening system, a portable system that interprets images quickly, and also with infrared scanning, detects temperature fluctuations.



Inspectors work with the latest tools to assist them to combat wildlife trafficking.

Photo: USFWS

Service OLE in Valley Stream, hosted two Environment and Climate Change Canada wildlife officers from the provinces of Ontario and Quebec.

PHOTO OPPOSITE PAGE:

During Operation Cast Net, K-9 teams detected numerous wildlife items in passenger baggage including queen conch meat, dead bats, dried guinea pigs, and leather shoes made of protected reptile skin. This effort was essential to the interagency coordination in South Florida, which is integral to the mission of combating illegal wildlife. Pictured are Service and Florida Fish and Wildlife Game Commission K-9 teams.

Photo: USFWS

2015 Wildlife Inspection Activity

Port of Entry FY 2015 Shipments

Designated Ports

Anchorage, AK	3,739
Atlanta, GA	4,921
Baltimore, MD	3,186
Boston, MA	2,708
Chicago, IL	8,264
Dallas/Fort Worth, TX	8,791
Honolulu, HI	4,699
Houston, TX	2,945
Los Angeles, CA	26,916
Louisville, KY	11,323
Memphis, TN	12,578
Miami, FL	12,488
New Orleans, LA	729
Newark, NJ	19,047
New York, NY	31,168
Portland, OR	649
San Francisco, CA	6,242
Seattle, WA	3,105
Designated Ports	162,868
Non-designated Ports	22,805
Non-staffed Ports	8,298
TOTAL	193,971

The Canadian wildlife officers were interested in the port operations at John F. Kennedy International Airport, specifically the interdiction of elephant products and the trend of unlawful importation of live exotic birds.

A Service wildlife inspector from Newark, along with the Food and Drug Administration and CBP's Centers of Excellence, presented an overview of Service and Federal wildlife laws at the Luxury Fashion & Beauty Products Trade Seminar in Bryant Park, New York. The inspector explained the Service's laws that pertain to wildlife in fashion and beauty products, the process and required documentation, and included a discussion concerning the ITDS integration and how the "one-stop" Internet interface should, and will, be used by the trade. The focus of this trade seminar was to educate U.S. and international importers associated with the fashion and beauty products industries.



Inspectors are seizing greater numbers of sea cucumbers. Photo: USFWS

In addition, other outreach events where Service wildlife inspectors participated included the Seattle-Tacoma (SeaTac) International Airport Air Cargo Stake Holders Meeting; the Dallas Safari Club convention; the Chicago CBP Trade Show; the convention of the National Association



Inspectors at the Port of Louisville discovered and seized elephant ivory products. Photo: USFWS



A carved elephant scapula was seized by inspectors at the Port of Seattle. Photo: USFWS

of Music Merchants; multiple Smithsonian's National Zoo events; the Turtle Mountain Band of the Chippewa Indians Reservation; Alaskan furriers; and an Earth Day weekend event at the Aquarium of the Pacific in Long Beach, California that was attended by tens of thousands of visitors.

Inspectors from Seattle and Blaine brought into compliance three sea cucumber exporters who had exported approximately 25,000 kilograms (27.5 tons) of sea cucumbers in only a few months.

Inspection Accomplishments

Sea cucumber and sea urchins shipments continue to increase and wildlife inspectors are processing more

entries for these commodities and seizing a greater number of shipments. For example, in Miami 2,090 kilograms (2.3 tons) of frozen chocolate chip sea cucumbers, valued at \$72,290, were seized from commercial shipments from Mexico. The shipments were consigned to California companies, but they attempted to clear their shipments in Miami. This extreme change of locale prompted the inspectors to be suspicious of the legality of the shipments. In a separate shipment, New York inspectors detained a commercial import of 775 kilograms (1,709 pounds) of sea cucumbers from Mexico that had a Mexican government stamp, but it was determined the stamp was fraudulent. In Houston, inspectors seized 78 pounds of sea cucumbers

and at the Port of San Ysidro, 5.75 kilograms (12.7 pounds) of protected sea cucumbers from Mexico were seized.

Traditional Asian medicinals (TAMs) continued to be imported illegally and wildlife inspectors are interdicting shipments both in cargo and in personal accompanying baggage. This is alarming because several endangered and threatened species, as well as other species whose numbers are significantly declining, are ingredients found in TAMs. In Dallas-Fort Worth, wildlife inspectors seized 30 bottles (total pill count of 4,200) containing pangolin and 1,630 TAM pills containing musk deer; inspectors in Los Angeles seized 20 vials containing bear bile; and inspectors in



Service OLE from Baltimore and Headquarters, and International Affairs staff, hosted an illegal wildlife product booth at the National Zoo's "Wildlife Trafficking Day." Photo: USFWS



Sea turtle scutes were smuggled inside of and declared as, cereal and dessert mix boxes. Photo: USFWS



Inspectors at the Port of New Orleans properly identified and seized 14 birds for various violations. Photo: USFWS



Protected reptiles were wrapped in newspapers and then placed into socks to be smuggled past inspectors, but thanks to the Burlingame inspectors, these animals were seized. Photo: USFWS



Inspectors in Los Angeles seized taxidermied koalas. Photo: USFWS



Honolulu seized TAMs containing harp seal, and 60 packets labeled to contain orchid and turtle shell.

In the Northwest Region, wildlife inspectors interdicted wildlife products from Blaine, Washington to Guam. Notable items seized in 2015 included elephant tongue meat and a scapula; homeopathic medicine containing venomous pit viper; footwear and small leather products made from exotic leather of elephant, caiman, crocodile, python, tegu elk, ostrich, shark, stingray, and eel; live corals; giant clam meat; leopard tortoise shell; sea turtle shell jewelry; black coral bead necklaces; TAMs with leopard bone; sperm whale tooth carvings; a wolf skin; a sport hunted Hartmann's mountain zebra trophy; a harp seal skin coat; and 1,000 kilograms (1.1 U.S. tons) of shark fins.

In the Southwest Region at the Port of Houston, an inspector issued a \$3,425 violation notice to a commercial importer of antiques for illegally importing a mirror trimmed with antlers, boar tusks, and European brown bear claws; one wooden decorative sea turtle inlay box and table (importer stated the table was painted to look like tortoise shell); and one giant clam shell decorative bowl that was declared as "carved oak shell."

Inspectors in Chicago, the Midwest Region, seized 194 American alligator wristwatch bands, valued at \$9,300. An \$8,000 civil penalty was issued and the watchbands were forfeited to the government. In a separate seizure,



203 Hawksbill sea turtle scutes were falsely labeled as "material for making handicrafts." Photo: USFWS

they discovered 216 Siberian weasel hairbrushes. The shipment, from Sri Lanka, was discovered during a proactive inspection and found in violation of the Endangered Species Act, and CITES permit, declaration, and marking regulations.

Highlights from the Southeast Region included elephant ivory, sea turtle, live bird, and king cobra seizures. In Kentucky, inspectors seized culinary utensils made from African elephant ivory and a carved ivory bracelet and a tusk that was engraved with a serial number and the year "2007." Also in Kentucky, inspectors discovered 203 hawksbill sea turtle scutes from a shipment that was manifested as "material for making handicrafts" and in Memphis, inspectors seized another 45 sea turtle shell scutes that were hidden in, and declared as, cereal boxes. Inspectors at the Port of New Orleans noticed permit inconsistencies concerning



Daily, Service wildlife inspectors find illegal wildlife and wildlife products. Photo: USFWS

an upcoming CITES shipment of 96 parrots and macaws from a California resident to Tiazhong, Taiwan. They properly identified all of the bird species, scanned the birds for microchips, and seized four macaws and 10 parrots for violations. Inspectors in Louisville discovered three juvenile king cobras died in transit as they were smuggled inside of socks that were covered with plastic grass, placed into two small straw baskets, and covered with clear packing tape. The snakes were part of a shipment manifested as “kids products and toys,” and were comingled with small plastic toys, small stuffed animals, and children’s books.

Two substantial seizures made by the inspectors of the Northeast Region include 42,240 bottles of a hair product containing Siberian sturgeon caviar extract and 616 boxes of undeclared, CITES-listed, coral beads from a U.S. based craft supply company that had imported numerous coral bead shipments through various ports including Elizabeth, Atlanta, Chicago, and Seattle. Inspectors also discovered the inhumane shipment of live pythons and lizards by an airline. The airline grossly mishandled the

live animal shipment, causing the death of over 372 CITES-listed reptiles. This discovery led to \$10,000 civil penalty paid by the airline. Service wildlife inspectors also worked closely with zoos and aquariums. In Alaska, inspectors assisted with the transport of “Harry” a live Sumatran rhinoceros, who was en route from the Cincinnati Zoo to Indonesia, and also with the import of frozen giant panda sperm needed for the immediate insemination of a female giant panda at the Memphis Zoo. Inspectors also assisted with three national operations involving the smuggling of turtles, elephant ivory, and other protected wildlife. The Port of Anchorage is home to two major express air carriers. Proactive inspections resulted in 15 violation notices issued; nine shipments contained 22 elephant ivory carvings; and inspectors intercepted 206 undeclared wildlife shipments with 46% of those illegal shipments resulting in investigations.

The Pacific Southwest Region also interdicted a variety of illegal wildlife and wildlife products. Inspectors in Burlingame discovered over 60 live, undeclared reptiles that were being smuggled. Geckos, turtles,

and various lizards were wrapped in newspaper, placed inside of black socks, and then placed into two unmarked cloth sacks. Ten of the lizards were identified as CITES Appendix II species. The total value of these animals was estimated at \$12,750. Burlingame inspectors also seized several hunting trophies from a married couple who had hunted the wildlife and had falsely listed, or did not declare, the wildlife upon returning to the U.S. from Namibia. Trophies included baboon, gemsbok, springbok, warhog, and giraffe. At the Los Angeles International Airport, inspectors seized designer handbags made from crocodile and ostrich skin (one of the bags was valued at \$145,000). Inspectors also seized five mounted koalas from a world-renowned Australian taxidermist.

In addition to working closely with wildlife partners, Federal import/export partner agencies, and international counterparts, Service wildlife inspectors also performed countless hours of community outreach and education.



Support for Officers in the Field

The Office of Law Enforcement supports the work of its special agents and wildlife inspectors in the field by providing national policy guidance, professional training, and administrative and technical support. The program's state-of-the-art infrastructure also includes three special units that provide forensic analyses, high-tech investigative assistance, and intelligence gathering and analysis in support of Service wildlife crime investigations and wildlife inspection and smuggling interdiction operations.

Forensics Laboratory

The National Fish and Wildlife Forensics Laboratory (Lab), located in Ashland, Oregon, is the world's only full-service crime laboratory devoted exclusively to supporting wildlife law enforcement. Scientists at the Lab identify the species of wildlife parts and products seized as evidence. They link suspect, "victim," and crime scene through the examination and comparison of physical evidence; determine the cause of death of wildlife crime victims; and help analyze crime scenes.

In 2015, Lab scientists supported 370 wildlife crime investigations examining 2,700 individual items of evidence; conducted almost 1,300 photo identifications for probable cause seizures or for facilitating commerce; traveled to Anchorage, Eugene, Honolulu, and New York City to conduct on-site examination and analysis of evidence in OLE cases; gave 18 scientific presentations regarding improved ways to analyze wildlife forensic evidence associated with criminal prosecutions, and published eight peer reviewed articles in scientific journals. In addition, three Lab staff were selected to be members of the Organization of



A senior ornithologist explains forensic morphology to an African delegation visiting the lab. Photo: USFWS

Scientific Area Committees (OSAC) Subcommittee on wildlife forensics. The three participated in the inaugural meeting of the OSAC committees and will be on the panel that sets national standards in all areas of forensic science.

Specialists in the Chemistry Unit are developing a novel pilot project using genetic single nucleotide polymorphism (SNP) analyses via MALDI mass spectrometry to investigate the differentiation of multiplex systems possessing up to 40 SNP's.

The Genetics Unit validated techniques to improve DNA extraction from samples including ivory, rhino horn, crafted bone, and antler objects; developed improved database systems for reference sample tracking, critical reagent tracking, and reagent inventory tracking; presented results from collaborative research on identification and tracking of totoaba in illegal trade; assisted with data for presentation for the species table at the 2015 meeting of the Trilateral Commission; and processed 1,243 vouchered reference specimens from 60 different species

for the reference freezer and reference database.

The Morphology Unit completed research on the osteology of bald and golden eagles, resulting in the documentation of qualitative morphological characters differentiating most of the major bones of these species. This work will be the basis for a major new identification guide in 2016.

The Pathology Unit revised the bushmeat protocol that was disseminated to and is used by Service wildlife inspectors; revised the biosafety plan; and implemented new technical procedures.

Throughout the year, Lab staff also participated in numerous outreach, educational, and training events. They hosted the "Live Webcast from the Wildlife Forensics Lab," which won a national award for "Best Live Chat"; participated in "Resources and People Camp," a summer camp for inner city youth that provided in-depth exposure to environmental topics; led domestic and international training for field

PHOTO OPPOSITE PAGE:

A Lab ornithologist examines a seized item of evidence suspected of being made from Macaw feathers.
Photo: USFWS

officers and scientists on innovative approaches to wildlife crime forensic support; and participated on task groups and subcommittees such as the Organization of Scientific Area Committees specifically the Biology and DNA-Wildlife Forensics Subcommittee, and on the Forensics Subgroup for the President's Advisory Council for Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated Fisheries.

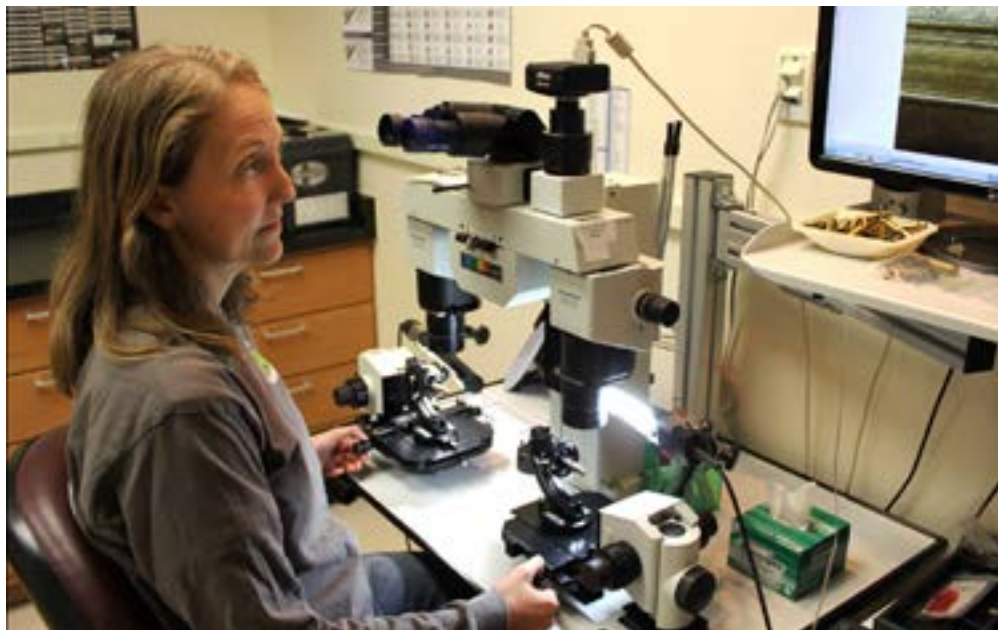
The Lab's Web site continues to be a popular and effective outreach site. In 2015, the site had 1,469,531 page views and the Lab's Feather Atlas site had 1,353,534 page views. The average views per day were an impressive 3,708.

Digital Evidence Recovery and Technical Support Unit

In the current climate of combating global wildlife trafficking, organized crime syndicates involved in illegal wildlife trafficking regularly use digital technology to carry out their criminal enterprise. In fact, almost every large-scale wildlife trafficking case investigated by the Office of Law Enforcement has at least one or more different types of digital evidence involved in the case (smart phone, computer, GPS, etc.), which requires special techniques provided by the Digital Evidence Recovery and Technical Support Unit (DERTSU) for proper handling and examination.

For a law enforcement agency to be proactive and successful today, and in the future, a high level of proficiency in the field of digital technology is required. For that reason, the OLE initiated DERTSU in 2009 to specialize in these disciplines and to give special agents in the field support in such increasingly critical areas as retrieval and analysis of computer-based records and utilization of advanced surveillance techniques. The Unit consists of two entities: a full-fledged digital forensic laboratory and a highly technical covert surveillance equipment program.

Based in Jacksonville, Florida, and co-located with a group providing similar support to criminal investigators with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, DERTSU is staffed by Service special agents and technical experts with skills in digital forensics and technology-based surveillance techniques. The Unit provides a source of multi-layered expertise (both technical and investigative) to assist field officers with large-scale and complex investigations.



A firearms examiner uses a comparison microscope to determine if two bullets (one "questioned" bullet found in a necropsied carcass and one "known" test-fired bullet from a suspect's weapon) were fired from the same rifle. Photo: USFWS

Similar to the Service's National Fish and Wildlife Forensics Lab, DERTSU is the only unit of its kind in the United States. It is a worldwide leader in providing highly technical digital forensic and covert surveillance equipment program support solely for the purpose of combating organized wildlife crime both domestically and internationally.

Intelligence Unit

The Office of Law Enforcement's Intelligence Unit collects and analyzes information on all aspects of wildlife trafficking to support Service investigations, inspections, and smuggling interdiction efforts. The Unit also coordinates intelligence sharing with other law enforcement agencies in the United States and other countries. A Service intelligence analyst cooperatively works with INTERPOL lending U.S. expertise on wildlife matters and acting as a conduit for information from other countries to the U.S., and vice versa, relating to criminal investigations involving wildlife. The unit has established and maintains a broad network of domestic and international contacts with conservation groups, trade associations, and other entities involved in, or concerned with, wildlife trade.

Intelligence support is vital to Service efforts to identify and disrupt wildlife trafficking networks. Through the Intelligence Unit, Service investigators have access to such services as background, criminal history, and

financial checks; border crossing, airline and license checks; wildlife valuations; document analysis; trade research; toll record analysis; link chart creation; prior case research; and Web site mirroring. Plans have been proposed to expand the unit in the near future.



A genetics lab technician (visiting from Mexico) collects tissues from suspected totoaba fish bladders for species-determining DNA tests and to develop a DNA database of this taxa.

Photo: USFWS



Technical support is crucial in the fight against global wildlife trafficking.

Photo: USFWS

Appendix: Laws Enforced

The Office of Law Enforcement upholds the Nation's wildlife and plant protection laws. Brief summaries of these statutes appear below.

Lacey Act (18 U.S.C. 42; 16 U.S.C. 3371-3378). This Act prohibits the importation, exportation, transportation, sale, or purchase of fish, wildlife, or plants taken or possessed in violation of State, Federal, tribal, and foreign laws. It also authorizes the Secretary of the Interior to designate injurious wildlife and ensure the humane treatment of wildlife shipped to the United States. Originally enacted in 1900, the Lacey Act is the Nation's oldest Federal wildlife protection law.

Migratory Bird Treaty Act (16 U.S.C. 703-712). Except as allowed by implementing regulations, this Act makes it unlawful to pursue, hunt, kill, capture, possess, buy, sell, purchase, or barter any migratory bird, including feathers or other parts, nests, eggs, or migratory bird products.

Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act (16 U.S.C. 668-668C). This Act makes it illegal to import, export, or take bald or golden eagles, or to sell, purchase, or barter their parts or products made from them, including nests or eggs.

Endangered Species Act (16 U.S.C. 1531-1543). This Act prohibits the importation, exportation, taking, and commercialization in interstate or foreign commerce of fish, wildlife, and plants that are listed as threatened or endangered species. The Act also implements the provisions of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES).

Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Stamp Act (16 U.S.C. 718). Commonly referred to as the "Duck Stamp Act," this law requires waterfowl hunters 16 years of age or older to purchase and possess a valid Federal waterfowl hunting stamp before they take migratory waterfowl.

Marine Mammal Protection Act (16 U.S.C. 1361-1407). This Act establishes a moratorium on the take and importation



Service OLE discovered walrus that had been shot, beheaded, and with tusks removed from a large-scale walrus haul out on a beach in Northwest Alaska. The U.S. Marine Mammal Protection Act protects all marine mammals, including cetaceans (whales, dolphins, and porpoises), pinnipeds (seals and sea lions), sirenians (manatees and dugongs), sea otters, and polar bears within the waters of the United States.

Photo: Joel Garlich-Miller/USFWS

of marine mammals, including parts and products, and defines Federal responsibilities for the conservation of marine mammals. It assigns management authority for the sea otter, walrus, polar bear, dugong, and manatee to the Department of the Interior.

Airborne Hunting Act (16 U.S.C. 742j-1). Section 13 of the Fish and Wildlife Act of 1956 is commonly referred to as the Airborne Hunting Act. It prohibits taking or harassing wildlife from aircraft, except when protecting wildlife, livestock, and human health or safety as authorized by a Federal or State license or permit.

National Wildlife Refuge System Administration Act (16 U.S.C. 668dd-668ee). This 1966 Act constitutes an "Organic Act" for the National Wildlife Refuge System. It provides guidelines for administration and management of all areas in the system including "wildlife refuges, areas for the protection and conservation of fish and wildlife that are threatened with extinction, wildlife ranges, game ranges, wildlife management areas, or waterfowl production areas."

African Elephant Conservation Act (16 U.S.C. 4201-4245). This Act provides additional protection for the African elephant. It establishes an assistance program for elephant-producing countries



Smuggled elephant ivory was discovered in false handicraft and artisanal carvings from Africa. Investigations of wildlife trafficking violations under the U.S. Lacey Act often produce evidence to substantiate violations of other Federal laws such as Smuggling, Conspiracy, Money Laundering and other related financial crimes. Photo: USFWS

of Africa and provides for the creation of an African Elephant Conservation Fund. In addition, the Act places a moratorium on the importation of raw or worked ivory from African elephant-producing countries that do not meet certain criteria.

Wild Bird Conservation Act (16 U.S.C. 4901). This 1992 Act promotes the conservation of exotic birds by encouraging wild bird conservation and management programs in countries of origin; by ensuring that all U.S. trade in such species is biologically sustainable and of benefit to the species; and by limiting or prohibiting imports of exotic birds when necessary.

Rhinoceros and Tiger Conservation Act (16 U.S.C. 5301-5306). The 1998 reauthorization of this Act prohibits the import, export, or sale of any product,

item, or substance containing, or labeled or advertised as containing, any substance derived from tiger or rhinoceros.

Antarctic Conservation Act (16 U.S.C. 2401). This Act provides for the conservation and protection of the fauna and flora of Antarctica. The Act makes it unlawful for any U.S. citizen to take any native bird or mammal in Antarctica or to collect any native plant from any specially protected area on that continent. In addition, the Act makes it unlawful for anyone in the United States to possess, sell, offer for sale, deliver, receive, carry, transport, import, export, or attempt to import or export from the United States any native mammal or bird taken in Antarctica or any plant collected in any specially protected area.

Archeological Resources Protection Act (16 U.S.C. 470aa). This Act protects archeological resources and sites on public and Indian lands and fosters increased cooperation among governmental authorities, the professional archeological community, and individuals who own collections of archeological resources obtained before October 31, 1979. The Act makes it illegal for any person to excavate, remove, damage, or otherwise alter or deface any archeological resource located on public or Indian lands without a permit. In addition, the Act makes it illegal for any person to sell, purchase, exchange, transport, receive, or offer to sell, purchase, or exchange any archeological resource taken from public or Indian lands in violation of Federal, State, or local law.

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